

Conservation, Community Resource Management and Sustainable Development

A Case Study of Mole National Park in Northern Ghana

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Centre for Development and the Environment

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to God Almighty first for His Gift and Guidance.

*Then to my senior brother, Robert Kandoh and beloved mother Najua-Ngisah
Kandoh.*

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It is of course the work of God to come through this academic journey with inspiration, energy and enlightenment to offer my contribution in the field of Environment and Sustainable Development. I express my gratitude to the staff and year colleagues of Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) for the cordial but challenging atmosphere that has brought me this far.

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I wholeheartedly thank the Almighty God and say thank you LORD.

Abstract

This thesis is the result of a study of the Mole National Park Project and its impact on the local community. The study seeks to investigate the local people's perceptions and expectations of as well as opinions on the establishment and management of Park and the extent to which its activities have impacted on the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the local people. Another key element of the wildlife conservation management project that the study sought to examine is the current level of local community's involvement and participation in the rural development initiatives of the Park project. A case study approach was adopted. Qualitative data was collected by means of individual interviews, focus group discussions, and informal talks with key informants as well as through observation and document review. The local residents and Park employees were randomly or accidentally sampled, whilst local officials and opinion leaders were purposively /strategically sampled.

The study revealed that the chiefs/elders but not the ordinary residents were involved in the land acquisition negotiations by government to establish the Park project and these traditional leaders received compensation on behalf of their subjects. The data indicates that the exclusion of ordinary people or their limited participation in park activities especially, in management and administrative issues contributed to a mixture of perceptions about the Park project and its effects. Generally, a majority of the local people especially women were happy with the recent development initiatives instituted by Park management in collaboration with International Conservation Agencies. Income generating activities through micro-credit schemes and improvement in public services were considered of high priority, as means of possible wildlife conservation resource development of the area. On the other hand, some people especially, male were dissatisfied due to their limited involvement in the management issues of the park project. The results indicate that there is the need for a new management scheme with greater participation of local communities in the decision-making process and particularly involving the youth.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASIP	Agricultural Sector Investment Programme
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CREMA	Community Resource Management Area
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GES	Ghana Education Service
GTB	Ghana Tourist Board
GWD	Ghana Wildlife Division/Game and Wildlife Department
HIPIC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MNP	Mole National Park
MNPA	Mole National Park Area
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PA(s)	Protected Area(s)
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WGDA	West Gonja District Assembly
WHC	World Heritage Centre

1. General Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Conservationists have often admonished that when the last tree dies, the last man dies, which highlights a mutual interdependence between mankind and the environment. If that ever happens then the issue shall not only become a tragedy but an unpardonable indictment on man's negligence to formulate policies to preserve and conserve both floral and faunal resources of the biosphere upon which humans depend for their long-term survival. It is therefore imperative that some kind of framework or policy be put in place to govern the way humans use environmental resources. Policies are, however, matters of differing values, and policy decisions are taken for people whose preferences are somewhat different. A policy choice will also tend to satisfy some people more than others, because it comes closer to what they want at the cost of others.

In recent times the state and its institutions exert much influence on conservation and protected area (PA) tourism. Protected area tourism has assumed the centre stage of the development agenda of most developing or least endowed countries, of which Ghana is no exception. Many countries have realized the enormous socio-economic and foreign exchange potentials of protected area tourism as a lucrative export activity, which can be a catalyst for their development efforts. So for decades many countries have embraced PA tourism as a panacea for socio-economic transformation. Conservation through protected area development and its tourism activities may lead to social change in host communities and sometimes to social problems. The tourism activities can be a major agent for change in the socio-economic, political, cultural, and environmental systems of a destination area. Developments in protected area tourism have been so monumental that few countries especially the developing ones, can afford to ignore wildlife conservation and tourism. Tourism is now the second single largest source of foreign exchange earner, after oil, in the 49-so-called least

developed countries (Courier/Nastney Magazin, 2001 cited in Epler Wood, 2002).

Establishments of protected areas have been the most widely accepted means of biodiversity conservation so far, supported by national and international agencies. By definition, designation of a protected area implies some restricted use of its resources (Adams and Hulme, 2001). Local communities are vulnerable to the establishment of protected areas, particularly in developing countries since their livelihoods are dependent on them (Mishra et al., 1992). For local people pay indirectly not only by loss of access to resources such as fuelwood, fodder and other non-timber forest products, but often by direct losses from crop and livestock raiding by wild animals dispersing from protected areas. It is however being increasingly recognized in recent times that protected areas should play a role in sustaining local people's livelihoods (IUCN, 2005).

The management of protected areas has increasingly moved towards 'community based conservation'. This serves as a means of reconciling conservation and development objectives by ensuring that the interest and participation of the local people are taking into account in making trade-offs (Adams & Hulme 2001:193). In practice, national park outfits throughout Africa especially are trying to collaborate with local people in order to improve their effectiveness and also reduce the potential negative perceptions that may arise. This is illustrated by the case of one of the best conserved ecosystems, namely Mole National Park in Northern Ghana. Portions of key elements of the management plan of the Park (GWD 2004) are that local communities participate in the management of the resource and as well gain economically from wildlife utilization.

Africans, however, are struggling with severe social and economic problems such as poverty, long-standing economic stagnation, rapid population growth, and environmental deterioration. Because of the pressures that Africans face in making a living, the application of community-based conservation may not occur as readily or as successfully as its advocates would hope (Hackel, 2001:726). In

Ghana and other parts of Africa adverse community reactions to land seizures for public good and ownership stem from the way of resource acquisition. This is especially so where the affected local people have not been adequately consulted and compensated for loss of resources, that once constituted the basis of their livelihood (Bushell and Eagles, 2007). Many scholars have therefore, often criticised and cautioned policy makers about the dangers of uncritically adopting protected area eco-tourism as a rural development option, without assessing its impact on local community livelihood needs. The practice of alienating local residents from wildlife resources and legally excluding them from accessing the resources makes local people the real bearers of the cost of conservation without any significant benefits (Ashley, 2000). Participatory rural development methodology, especially where vulnerable people and environments are involved, is the preferred option in vogue (Cater and Lowman, 1994).

Natural resources conservation policies and programmes for bio-diversity and eco-tourism development have often failed to accord recognition to the centrality of local communities in sustainable management of fauna and flora (Go, F. & Jenkins, C. L. 1997). More often than not such policies tend to pay very little attention to both programme intended and spill over effects on socio-economic conditions of the local people. In Sub-Saharan Africa, although the creation of protected areas for bio-diversity conservation has enhanced the preservation of wildlife for eco-tourism development, it has been argued that if local communities were directly co-managing parks, multiplier beneficial effects would have been more widespread than it is the case now. It is an irrefutable fact that successful development and sustainability of any community-based project such as wildlife conservation requires the co-operation of the local people living around the resource areas. Such community co-operation however is a function of the people's expectations, perceptions, attitudes towards environmental resources, especially the impact of such wildlife conservation resource on their overall quality of life.

Bio-conservation policies just as all policies when made and adopted are to be evaluated to determine their post implementation effect on the local people living close to the conservation projects like national parks. This study will seek to find out the exact post implementation of the Mole Park in Ghana on the local people. Conflict of interests often arise between local community people living around protected areas and state institutions in-charge of ecosystem conservation. For, the establishment of these nature parks for recreation, eco-tourism, education, and exclusive protection of areas for bio-diversity has tended to conflict with existing local sustainable resource use and livelihood practices of local people. While some local people may see the creation of the conservation projects such the Mole National Park as a bane, others may see it as a blessing for the local people living in the park area. This perceptual difference would not be surprising in that policy systems usually contain dialectical processes that are characterised by inseparable objective and subjective dimensions of policy making.

Just as all policies, conservation policies are made and implemented in order to solve or ameliorate a problem or set of problems of society. Some policies if not well designed may however create more problems than solutions to societal or community problems. The task of the study among others, is to find out from the local people, how they perceive the effect of the creation of the Mole Park an output of a conservation policy, on their community social conditions. Hence, an understanding of both intended and spill over effects of the national park project and its tourism activities on the socio-economic and environmental interests of local people, recounted from the respondents' own lived experiences is worth researching.

1.2 Problem Statement

This study seeks to examine local people's perceptions and opinions on the creation and management of the Mole National Park in Northern Ghana. The study focuses on community socio-economic, cultural and environmental

aspects. Environmental issues form an important backdrop to the Park project, but are not studied in detail in this study. In low income areas such as Ghana, people's primary concern is their socio-economic wellbeing, and therefore one may expect their position on conservation and environmental protection issues, to be influenced by their perceptions of how proposed or current conservation policies affect their incomes and general quality of life.

The people living in and around the Mole National Park are basically rural dwellers, the majority is illiterate and their main source of livelihood is farming and hunting. Peoples' degree of involvement or exclusion at the time of the acquisition of the land for the nature reserve and rural tourism project will be examined. As the study will show, the lands for the park resource were sometimes forcefully acquired and the local people located here were as well forcefully evicted without proper compensation. This however contrasts park policies which encompasses consultative and inclusive approaches. The study will also focus on the effects of this process in terms of people's evaluation of benefits of the park resource.

Against this backdrop I will address the following central research questions:

What are the perceptions of various groups within the local community on the creation and management of the Mole Park Project? And to what extent may this intervention be considered as a step towards sustainable development?

To investigate these questions this study has the following specific research questions:

- i) To what extent was the local community involved in the processes leading to the creation of the Mole National Park?
- ii) What are the current perceptions of the local people on the Park's on-going activities?

-
- iii) To what extent has the wildlife conservation project enhanced the socio-economic development of the local communities?
 - iv) What is the current level of local community participation in the management of the national park?
 - v) This study will also seek to find out the effect of the park project on nature/wildlife.

1.3 Methodology

Methods employed in the study are intended to capture the demographic characteristics, expectations, perceptions, experiences and opinions of respondents towards various aspects of the Mole National Park in the West Gonja District of Northern Ghana. The study, therefore, examines the local people's overall perception of the creation and impact of the Park project on the settlements in and around the Park. Thus, how the establishment of the Park affects or impacts on the communities living around the Mole National Park. The methodological approach for this study is described as a case-study within the qualitative domain.

In the course of the fieldwork, the study relied on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data included in-depth open-ended and semi-structured interviews with local community members as well as Park officials. This type of interviews permitted me to probe to unearth respondents' over all perception of the effect of the creation of the Park in their community. Formal and informal discussions were also conducted with officials of the Park and opinion leaders of the area. Both observation and focus group discussion with organized identified groups were equally conducted.

The study also made use of secondary data, especially official records of Game and Wildlife Department including bits of the Park's management plan as well as annual reports; Local District Assembly among others. The secondary sources also involves archival research from books, journals, magazines, newspapers,

reports, articles, internet materials and individual writing exercises related to this study. It is worthy to note that these methods were not without challenges. (See: Fieldwork challenges in chapter three).

1.4 Rationale for the Study

Many reasons may tend to influence a researcher's choice of a particular topic. In this case the Mole National Park is the choice of the study. Despite its rich stock of wildlife species, the MNP has not been accorded due attention in national discourse as regards research and its application to principles of rural development, as compared to other protected areas in Ghana. Nature reserves such as Kakum National Park and Assin-Attandanso (both in the Central Region of Ghana) have been given much publicity in the works of several authors such as Abane et al (1999), Mensah-Ntiamoah (1998) and Dei (2000). The fact that the Mole National Park is the remotest of Ghana's national parks invariably means that very little research work has yet been done on it.

Mole National Park was chosen because it is the least known of Ghana's protected areas and also the largest and pioneer national park whose fortunes have probably never been fully discovered and tapped for national development. There is dearth of knowledge on the impact of the national park project on the local communities living in and around Park. This knowledge gap is particularly noticeable in Northern Ghana and this study attempts to fill this gap using Mole National Park Area (MNPA) as a case study.

Knowledge about the impact of conservation projects on communities in and around nature reserves may help influence conservation policy making in the country. The study may be useful for possible intervention projects by private and public organizations that shall be aimed at alleviating any negative impacts and further enhance the beneficial aspects of conservation schemes, for marginalized, and vulnerable local communities.

The focus of this study is important because, rural development initiatives such as the creation of national parks as related studies have proven; usually have both positive and negative effects on rural communities. An assessment of the local people's perception of the extent and nature of the Mole National Park's influence the socio-economic and cultural life of the surrounding settlements may provide government with tools for some solutions to the area's challenges. A timely exposition of the Park's negative effects on community residents, especially, may alert government and other wildlife conservation agencies to provide solutions timely enough before problems assume alarming proportions in the area. Also an elaborate analysis of local community involvement in conservation policy formulation an implementation at the Park will likely contribute conflict resolution in the rural setting.

Studies elsewhere especially by Harding, (1997) dwelled on issues of democratizing community participation, residents' reactions, and physical impact aspects of protected area tourism. This study focuses on how and why bio-diversity conservation and protected area development, has affected the social conditions of local communities living along the borders of the Mole National Park. The study is therefore expected to enhance the understanding of some intended as well as inadvertent effects of conservation schemes in protected areas on social groups in and around the Mole National Park.

1.5 Organisation of the Thesis

This study is divided into eight main chapters. Each chapter is focused on a series of relevant themes. Chapter one has offered an introduction to the thesis with a general background to the study, highlighting on the research problem with research questions and justification given for the choice of factors presumed to be responsible for the stated problem. The chapter further states the methodological foundation of the study. Chapter two presents the study area in geographic and temporal context highlighting on the back ground of the study area, the park project, people and socio-cultural characteristics and the socio-

economic development in the area. Chapter three focuses on the theoretical foundation of the study which involves an integrative literature review that is of relevance to the study. These theoretical and conceptual models and other case studies will be applied as a supportive tool for the analysis and discussion of the research findings. The fourth chapter provides the methodological discussion of the study. Chapter five entails a concise outline of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and finally the research limitations and ethical challenges. The sixth and seven chapters are dedicated to data presentation and analysis of the research findings. It presents the analyses and discussion of the empirical findings in relation to the conceptual models adopted. Finally, chapter eight concludes the study with some key recommendations based on the findings.

The next chapter (2) provides a discussion of the general background of the study area.

2. The Study Area in Geographic and Temporal Context

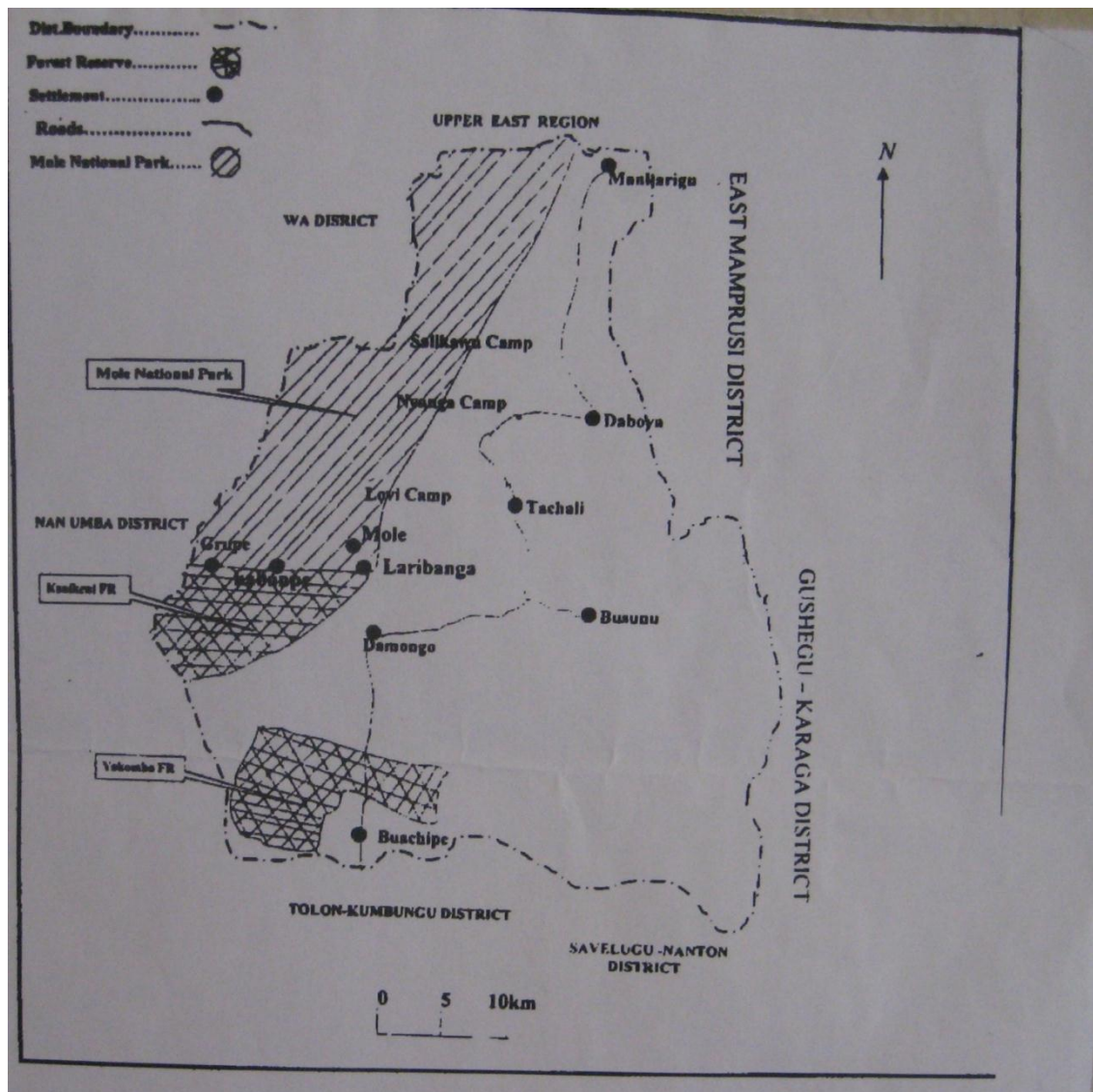
2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the general background of the study area. It describes the Park's location, biophysical characteristics, the park project as well as social and economic development in the MNPA.

2.1.2 Location of the Mole National Park

The study was conducted in the Mole National Park Area (MNPA) located in the West Gonja District of the Northern region of Ghana. It is 149km from Tamale, the regional capital of Northern Region and 15km from Damango, the district capital of West Gonja District Assembly. The Park that originally occupied an area of 4,840 square kilometres of land in the 1990s (GWD: Annual Report, 1994), now covers a total land area of approximately 5,198 square kilometres (Mole Feasibility Study Report, 1997). The total land area of the Park lies largely in the West Gonja and partly in the West Mamprusi and Wa Districts of Northern and Upper West Regions of Ghana respectively. The Mole National Park is one of the three parks established in the interior savannah ecological zone in the north of the country. The park according to the Mole Feasibility Study Report (1997) is the largest national park and the most prestigious in Ghana in terms of visitor attraction and tourist facilities. The park headquarters (Mole) is located right at a place where two famous slave raiders (*Samore* and *Babatu*) raided and erased a village to the ground. The headquarters is named after one of them - *Samole*. See Map of study area.

Map of Mole National Park Area



Source: Ghana Wildlife Division, 1994

2.1.3 The Mole National Park Project

The Mole National Park Area (MNPA) was mapped out in the early 1950s for a tsetse fly control programme that sought to destroy the said insect believed to be responsible for the spread of trypanosomiasis which hindered animal rearing in the area. Due to the area's unique variety of wild life, the government of Ghana officially acquired the area's southern portion for conservation. Consequently, some villages were forcefully displaced as settlements and farm lands were being encroached upon and Mole was officially declared a national park in 1971. The Park has since survived as a nature reserve and has over the years become home to a number of plant and animal species.

The decision to create the Park had both bio-diversity conservation and tourism promotion merits. The Park is adequately endowed with several species of flora and fauna whose pull-effect has been luring substantial numbers of tourists. The aim is also to bring in much needed foreign exchange for socio-economic development for Mole catchments in particular and Ghana as a whole. The Park project supports local communities living around the Park through improved livelihood activities, mainly community-based tourism.

The Park project seeks to help contribute to a better living standard of the community through the additional income that is generated from ecotourism activities. The project is following a sound natural resource management approach with a focus on modalities of resource use with minimum ecological impact that may contribute to local development and lead to attitudes and behaviour favourable for conservation and sustainability (MNP Draft Management Plan, 1996). The Mole National Park area is considered one of the most diversified ecotourism sites, with a reasonable stock of wildlife species. The Ghana Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission administers the park.

2.2 Biophysical Characteristics of MNPA

Topography and Geology

The Mole National Park lies on the stern rim of the Volta Basin and has a generally undulating topography that is characterized by flat-topped hills. A camp site known as the Konkori Scarp is the most prominent highland running in a north-south direction through the Park (see map of study area). The Park lies within two geological regions. About 65% of the Park lies within the Voltaian Sandstone Basin, while the other third (35%) is within the Savannah High Plains. The area west of Kananto-Ducie stretch is mainly of Precambrian schist (rock type) of more than 2,000 million years old and forms a gently undulating terrain. Where as the Park's western border comprises metamorphosed acid igneous rocks, mainly granites complex, shale, mudstone and sandstone deposits overlie Precambrian rocks in the eastern part of the Park to form the Volta Basin. Lateritic formations and alluvial deposits are the most common weathered granite (GWD, 1994).

The soil types vary slightly from the northern to the southern sectors of the Park. Generally, lateritic pans or outcrops are common in the MNPA and are the result of exposure of iron rich horizons due to erosion processes. Generally, all soil types in the study area have inherently low fertility, and are very susceptible to erosion and therefore unsuitable for arable agriculture. This might be the other justification for making the area a national park.

Climate

Like the rest of the Northern Region of Ghana, and features of the Guinea Savannah, the climate of the MNP is distinctly seasonal, with a mean annual temperature of 27.8 degrees centigrade with little variations of between 21.6 degrees minimum and 30.5 degrees centigrade maximum (GWD, 1994; UNESCO/WHC, 2000). The coldest period is December-February, while March and April are the hottest months of the year. At the northern borders of the Park,

around the Kulpwan River, rainfall is as low as 1,018mm per year. The source further reveals that the rains fall around April and can sometimes attain a high intensity of up to 300mm per hour and capable of causing considerable flash flooding and erosion of unprotected topsoil. The rains end in August-September and are followed by a long dry spell. Low precipitation, low soil fertility and the annual ritual of bush burning have tended to impose limitations to the development potentials and sustainability of agriculture, flora and faunal resources of the MNP catchments, in particular, and the West Gonja District in general (GWD, 2004).

The MNP is a fairly undisturbed Guinea Savannah ecosystem with very limited human impact through annual bush burning, localized farming and collection of fuel wood and wild fruits. The vegetation type in the Guinea Savannah is dominantly wooded land, with a grass layer. There are also noticeably narrow bands of riverine forests along many streams. Most of the Park's plant species are well spread throughout the Savannah zone (DWD, 1994; 2004). The undisturbed Guinea Savannah ecosystem, its remoteness, scenic beauty and tremendous amounts of wildlife, make MNP an enviable prime area for eco-tourism, recreation, research and education.

Bush burning is the significant threat to flora and fauna of the Park. Human activities, such as the clearing and burning method of agricultural land preparation, coupled with generally low fertility throughout the entire WGD, tend to adversely affect the vegetation cover. The Shea tree and *dawadawa* are by far the major species, and also contribute significantly to household subsistence. The Shea tree for example, provides butter for cooking and soap making, while *dawadawa* is a source spice. Larger tree species are also found in some catchments of the forest reserves, but much of the original or indigenous vegetation has been altered and degraded by human activities, especially charcoal burning and fuel wood collection. According to the Law enforcement Officer of the Park, the district banned charcoal burning and felling of live trees for fuel

wood. This is due to the increasing awareness of the serious environmental consequences that these human activities have for present as well as the future.

Park Fauna and Flora

The Mole National Park is a diversified ecotourism site and contains a significant variety of plant and animal wildlife resources. The main animal species at MNP include varieties of antelope, buffalo, warthogs, wild pigs, baboons and monkeys (red *patas*). It is also home to large carnivorous such as leopards, lions, hyenas, the large African elephants and dwarf hippopotamuses, due to its open natural setting. Mole's elephants, wild pigs and warthogs are tame and move about conspicuously and harmlessly through human settlements. The baboons, monkeys (red *patas*) and some birds are frequently seen moving around and receiving handouts such as bread, biscuits and sweets from tourists. MNP is also rich in bird life and contains over 300 species which live permanently in the park; while over 150 species of migratory birds regularly touch the down as they journey to new destinations (MNP-UNESCO/WHC, 2000). Dozens of crocodiles of different ages, sizes and colours are also seen as they bask in the sun or float in the pond. According to the Park Management staff, estimates of fauna species numbers, population dynamics and movements in recent years vary greatly, probably due to seasonal differences in animal distribution. Information on this faunal report was also obtained from unpublished records in the files of Ghana Wildlife Division (GWD/MNP), the staff of MNP or by visual observation. It is worthy to reiterate that the Park's remoteness, relative tranquillity and scenic beauty, coupled with its considerable number of wildlife species make it an attractive place for ecotourism, recreation and research.

2.3 People and Socio-Cultural Characteristics

Like many parts of the Northern region of Ghana, the West Gonja District consists of many ethnic, linguist and social groups, which are also culturally diverse. The main ethnic groups in the MNPA are *Gonja* and *Hanga* and the dominant language spoken in the area is *Gonja*. Traditional and Christian

religions are the main religions practiced by the indigenes. There is also Islamic religion that is practiced by a small proportion of the area. The people in the area are governed by *Busunu* chief (traditional head) who en-skins the chiefs of the communities around the MNPA. The chiefs and elders sit on hides of either domestic or wild animals, preferably the antelope. As culture and tradition demands, the chief is always surrounded by his elders, the *tendana* (land owner), linguist, *mbonwuru* (chief warrior), *imam* (Islamic leader), and the *magazia* (women leader).

The local people have always lived a life in tune with nature. Local materials are used to maintain the rare architectural styles of their houses, and their food and drinks come from all organic sources, grown and prepared in the community. As integral part of their way of life they have a particular location under a tree in front of the chief's house where their cultural performances/traditions of dance are showcased. This is usually organised during festivals such as *Jintigi*, Christmas and *Eid*, funerals and weddings.

2.4 Social and Economic Development

Social infrastructure development is rudimentary and inadequate, and therefore, poses a great challenge to socio-economic transformation of the WGDA, in general, and the Mole catchments in particular.

Roads and Transport

Except communities lying on the southern boundary of the Tamale – Wa road, the rest of the settlements around the Park are not readily accessible. Road access is limited to only to footpaths during the dry season, and is plied by tractors. Movement in the MNP area is mainly restricted to bicycles and walking or hiking. Many of the Park camps and villages are inundated during the rains and cut-off from the rest of the region during the raining season.

Public infrastructure in the form of schools and markets are generally in poor condition, though there are few HIPIC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) and ASIP (Agricultural Sector Investment Programme) funded projects established to improve the situation. A few of the settlements around the MNPA are provided with pump fitted boreholes under these projects with the rest totally dependent on streams, dams, and hand-dug wells for their water supply. Most of these water sources dry up during the off- raining season, and are often guinea worm infested. Water is a major problem facing many communities, and women and girls spend up to so much time during the day fetching water. The result of unwholesome sources of water is the prevalence of water borne diseases such as guinea worm and cholera among others.

Health

Health status of the population of WGDA area is generally among the lowest in the country. Major diseases in the district are malaria, pneumonia, hepatitis, and gastro-enteritis. The menace of HIV/AIDS has also been identified as a major health problem at both national and regional levels. Protein induced malnutrition has also been a very serious health problem in the district. Infant mortality rate is high due to the poor and inefficient health situation. Health facilities are inadequate, with shortages of qualified personnel, drugs and transport being the most acute. There is only one hospital in the District capital (Damango) that is managed by the Catholic Church. There is however, a health centre in MNPA there is a challenge of qualified personnel. Given the poor state of transportation network, and high levels of poverty in the district, it is obvious that majority of the population cannot access health services. A national health insurance policy has just been implemented though, it is of interest to find out to what extent the health centre at the Mole National Park, will impact on the inhabitants of the area.

Education

The WGDA also has very high illiteracy rate, with over 87% of school going age of 6 years out of school. The situation is worse for females who have an illiteracy rate of 91% of them never in school as compared to 83% of boys (GES, 1994-2004). There is a general lack of educational infrastructure, and the problem has been exacerbated by lack of teachers and teaching and learning materials. The few schools in the area all suffer from lack of basic infrastructure, furniture, learning and teaching materials, teachers, and vehicles. The study, therefore, also looked at the extent to which local communities are accessing educational and other social amenities at the MNPA

2.5. Economic development: Prospects and Problems

The West Gonja District has both economic development challenges and potentials. The District is predominantly agrarian, a majority of the labour force engaged in rain fed agriculture which is the main source of income for majority of people. Land is communally owned with chiefs making allocating decisions, as custodians of land. Shifting cultivation is widespread although some crop rotation and mixed cropping are practised. Farm sizes are small and are managed by small-scale peasant farmers, who use hoe and cutlass as the main types of implements for cultivation. Tractor services are patronized by some farmers who can afford although a hand full of them use bullock ploughs for land preparation and weeding. Main crops produced are maize, sorghum, millet, rice groundnuts, beans and cassava. Agricultural productivity is generally low but maize yield is quite substantial. The major problems facing farmers in the area include inadequate extension services, post-harvest losses, and poor marketing facilities, as a result of poor roads, inadequate transport and information service on marketing (Source: Agricultural Extension Officer, Mole). Fishing is also an important occupation of communities living along the Volta Lake and the white and Black Volta Rivers. Livestock rearing is not currently undertaken on a commercial scale though the potential exists.

Industry and commerce

Industrial and commercial activities employ about 8% of the labour force (Ghana, 2000). Industrial activity is dominated by informal production agro-based concerns like food processing, soap making, textiles and leather works. Others in the cottage industry category include mat and basket weaving, rope making, metal and wood works, black-smithing to produce household and simple agricultural farm tools, and vehicle repairs and the retail of petroleum products.

In the handicraft sub-sector, a significant observation has been that nearly 70% of the producers procure their raw materials from within the District, thereby ensuring local benefits through back ward linkages. Until recently, when the national electricity grid was extended to the district capital, and few other settlements, energy used to be one of the major constraints to industrial progress in the District. Other challenges to industrial development include inadequate supply of raw materials, poor marketing and access to credit, and lack of industry extension services. Potentials abound in salt and clay production at Daboya and Buipe, where limestone deposits abound in commercial quantities. Apart from trading in, fish, salt and foodstuff and manufactured goods, the area is also noted for tourism attractions.

Tourism

The Mole National Park is adequately endowed with several species of flora and fauna, whose pull-effect have been luring substantial numbers of tourists over the years. According to Ghana Tourist Board (GTB) tourism statistical fact sheet on Ghana, high visitor numbers to the Mole Park dates back to 1964 and realised tremendous increase in the 1970s and 80s (GTB, 1999). This involved both local and international tourists. However, after the 1979 military coup d'état and the resultant insecurity in the country, international visitor numbers declined sharply. From 1985 to date, the majority of visitors to the Park have been foreigners. While Ghanaian visitor numbers declined, between 1990 and 1992 that for

foreigners increased steadily at an annual rate of 16%. With the right marketing and management practices the MNP has the potential to bring in much needed foreign exchange for the socio-economic development of Mole catchments in particular and the nation at large. Other tourist attractions around the Mole Park catchment are the Laribanga Mystery stone, the Ancient Mosque, the Damba and Fire Festivals and the Gonja Kingdom Regalia. Potentials exist for water sport activities on the numerous streams and rivers around the study area (Source: Ghana Wildlife Division/ Mole Park records).

2.6 Summary

The study area's geographic and temporal contexts have been described and discussed in the chapter. Topical issues discussed include location, history, biophysical features, demographic characteristics of the District in which the study area is situated and the Park Project. The rationale or objective of the chapter was to create a basis or framework for analyzing wildlife conservation and its impact on socio-economic, cultural, environmental, and indeed the general impact of the creation of the Mole National Park on host communities

The next chapter is devoted to the theoretical foundation with an integrative literature review that would guide and inform the study.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a theoretical foundation that helps to understand the perception of the creation of the Mole National Park and its effect on the community's socio-economic development and well-being of the local people. I employed an integrative literature review with theoretical and conceptual models on conservation and natural resource management most suited to the problem of the study. Emphasis is on various ways earlier researchers have carried out studies in this field with specific regards to national parks. The purpose of the integrative literature review therefore, is to place the research problem within a context of related studies that will help guide the study towards achieving its objectives.

3.2 The Concept of Wildlife Conservation (Wilderness)

The concept of Wildlife (Wilderness) is a social construct (Cronon, 1995), invented during in the historical moments when conservation authorities, ecological elites and colonialists were empowered to control resources and other people's behaviour (Robbins, 2004). Through the concept of wildness, it helped colonialists in particular to secure power of controlling areas by exclusion and eviction of local people who were perceived to be threat to 'nature'. Rules were made by colonialists on who can use nature and how it can be used. The colonial rule created imagined histories by which they managed to erase the ecological legacies of human activity from landscapes.

The main aim towards their establishment is rooted in the philosophy of protectionism which requires displacement of local people and restriction of human use of protected resources (Brockington, 2002). Local people were conceived as threats to conservation rather than historic managers. The model of conservation on how 'wilderness' ought to be was copied from USA park system

in subsequent decades and later imposed on the third world countries including Africa through colonial administration at that time and later inherited by post-colonial governments (Neumann, 1998). This evolved into fortress conservation approach in many parts of the world which entailed the separation of people and nature by fencing area from local communities' access, either physically or by legal and/or economic regulations. Denevan (1992) gives a vivid picture of how the Native American landscape was humanized almost everywhere. He opines that after the establishment of national parks, the indigenous people were actively suppressed by military and bureaucratic action and subsequently removed.

The systems of wilderness areas exist in every country all over the world but mostly in the developing world. The way we see and imagine 'nature' as the literature has shown, we want to protect it through conservation policies and give local people (host) the right to benefit from the resources. The questions then to be asked are: Where is the place for the local people who were evicted and continue to be evicted from constructed wilderness? Are we looking on untouched natural/pristine areas or cultural landscapes? It is worthy to note as Robbins (2004) alludes to, that the repercussions of some of these concepts in environmental management is very crucial in that they direct our attention to the social origins and history of environmental processes and objects.

3.3 Conservation and Protected Area Management Paradigms

The view of protection of flora and fauna inside particular boundaries since its origination in the West and exported to Africa focuses mostly on the preservation of beautiful landscapes and wildlife, to be enjoyed by well-paying tourists, and safe the land for future generations. According to Douglas (1999:7) natural resource conservation does not necessarily mean not using the resources at present but refers to the mindful use of the current resources without compromising the ability of these resources to benefit the future generations. Conservation of natural resources is very important in sustainable environmental management because it is the wise use of the earth's resources by humanity.

Phillips (2003a) traces the nature and character of conservation and PAs to the wildlife resource management paradigms which created them. He categorized these paradigms into two distinct periods of how they evolved. The first is the classic (traditional) paradigm of protected areas (1860-1960s), also known as the Yellowstone model and two is the modern paradigm of protected area management announced by the World Parks Congress on Protected Areas held in Seattle, Yellowstone Grand-Teton 1972, Bali 1982, Caracas 1992 and Durban 2003 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002.

3.3.1 Classic (Traditional) Paradigm

Protected Areas (PAs) all over the world before the 1960s were set up and run as top-down and favored exclusive views of protected areas. Ghana's own protected area categories closely follow the guidelines of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This protected area management style basically went in close line with the autocratic style of colonial administration that was run especially in most parts of Africa. This view according to Phillips, (2003a) was that government knew best, public opinion was something officials helped to shape and not to be influenced by local people. The view reflected was not only the need to protect land and other natural resources from human abuse, and to conserve it for future generations, but also the need to institutionalize the management of such areas in bodies that are out of reach for local resource users as well as local authorities. The focus of management during this era was on creating parks which people did not hunt, gather, herd, farm, fell trees or even collect medicinal herbs.

The results of implementing this model were disastrous for the local communities as they were viewed as possible antagonists for local people as they were forced to settle outside of the parks. As Stevens (1997:31) observed and indicated 'that the natural resources of their (local people) former lands, which constituted the mainstay of their economies, were now off-limits'. Also, many local people

found that long-standing customary subsistence resource uses which were very critical to physical and cultural survivals became criminalized and were discouraged by fences, armed patrols and threats of jail terms and fines. This model of forced conservation is what is often referred to by some researchers as the 'fence and fines' approach. In this approach the community was not involved at all because every action undertaken in the process was forced on the community and this became the pivot around which enmity revolved between authorities and local people. Stevens (1997:32-33) further opines that in these conditions, 'subsistence practice became clandestine activity and traditional local resource management institutions and other conservation practices were abandoned in the areas that became managed as protected areas'.

In this conventional 'isolationist approach', as Kamugisha *et al* (1997:4) calls it, policing and patrolling became both the norms and key conditioning factors in the relations between the protected areas and people. Examples of forced removals of local communities in Africa include: the Masai from Serengeti, Tangarire and Manyara, the Ik of Uganda from the Kidepo National Park, the Phoka of Malawi from Nyika National Park and in Asia about 22,000 people from Royal Chitwan National Park in Nepal (Stevens, 1997). The rural people as asserted by Infield (1992:8) as result of this approach have come to see conservation as something negative, something that excludes them the resources and lands that they formerly used. The evicted communities were denied opportunities to participate and benefit from the tourism business built on their former indigenous homes. This therefore became the basis for conflict between conservationists and tourism development on one hand and local people on the other hand.

Under such circumstances, it is difficult for one to authoritatively claim that conservation is sustainable; it only becomes a short-term scenario when the local community members exist in isolation from the parks. Conservation needs to be pursued in order to benefit all affected parties in one way or the other. People who loose their lands and other natural resources to efforts of conservation need

to be given attention by giving opportunity to participate and benefit from conservation. In part what must be acknowledged is that the survival and long-term sustainability of national parks and nature reserves depends on the support of the adjacent communities. Therefore, failure to involve the local communities in the conservation and management of protected areas suffocated the efforts of the classic (traditional) approach. Nonetheless, by 1960s winds of change were blowing with more calls for new modern approaches in managing protected areas (IUCN, 1994). The new attention given to environmental issues in the 1970s was therefore, followed up by a gradual changing approach of protected area management. In the context of this study protected areas (PAs) will refer to national parks and wildlife reserves.

3.3.2 Community-Based Conservation and Resource Management

Community-based approaches to the environment evolved from statements and outcomes from the Brundtland Commission (1987) and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro 1992, which put the environment firmly on international development agendas (UNCED; 1992). There was reaffirmation from the summit in Rio de Janeiro that protected areas can play a part in sustainable development process (McNeely 1993). Underlying this is the moral argument that conservation goals should contribute to and not conflict with basic human needs. It is these concerns about the disruptive effects of conflict over ownership, development and use of environmental resources that have engaged the attention of governments and conservation practitioners worldwide.

Various descriptive combinations of terms are commonly used to refer to the concept of community-based conservation. Such terms include integrated conservation and development, community conservation, collaborative management or co-management. For the purposes of this study, the term community-based conservation (CBC) is referred to programs conducted in areas surrounding national parks or protected areas, with the main purpose of soliciting

support of neighboring communities for protected areas, through such activities that raise conservation awareness and seek to benefit these communities. Various conservation and natural resources management models have been proposed to integrate neighbouring communities in natural resource management process towards community development. Two commonly cited models of community-based natural resources management frameworks are the *populist* and *rights-based* models.

Under the populist framework of resource management, active local participation is overtly encouraged. This is what researchers such as Western, (1994) describe as a comprehensive democratization of the development process. Development populism recommends active involvement of project principals right from programme conceptualization, planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. A number of conservationists believe that communities in control of natural resource management are better managers than state institutions, and through conservation practices, they will be able to improve their economic well being (Western 1994). The underlying thinking of community based conservation management is that local communities have been alienated from resources they should rightly own, control, manage, and benefit from (Songorwa et al., 2000). It has been argued that projects, which are of the people, for the people and by them usually, have greater chances of success and sustainability than the traditional top-down centralized resources management approach to development, which tends to marginalize local people.

Advocates of this framework stress that community-based conservation and natural resource management is a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach: it changes the usual way of doing things by giving local people a strong voice in land-use decisions instead of having them imposed from above (Lane, 2001). These observations confirm the view of Scheyvens (1999a), that local community involvement in rural development projects, particularly in protected area ecotourism, can be very positively rewarding in economically marginalized

regions, if it encourages the sustainable use of natural resources and enhances the people's control over development in their surrounding area.

It is worthy noting however, that simply assigning authority and responsibility to local communities without assessing the full range of users of a resource, the diversity of individual interests and the capacity of existing local institutions to take on additional responsibility, may not be enough. That may only complicate rather than solve problems associated with appropriation and management of environmental natural resources.

After all wildlife resources have multiple functions and are often exploited by a wide variety of interest groups. These heterogeneous interest groups often have quite different objectives and resource priorities. If the devolution of power over access to natural resource use should be effective and equitable as Kiss (1990) opines, it must take into account the multiple functions and heterogeneous user groups. He further argues that it is also imperative that institutional strengthening and training be provided by government agencies in areas of management, technology, leadership and project planning skills. Although community-based conservation is mainly concerned with wildlife conservation, it has political, social, and institutional implications beyond wildlife conservation. According to Songorwa et al., (2000: 608), CBC approach has the '... potential of becoming a catalyst for socio-political and institutional changes in the communities where it is introduced, and may spread to other parts of the country, and lead to demand for an even greater devolution of power.'

Most state agencies tasked with formulating and implementing public conservation policy, are often confronted with the challenge of devising governance arrangements, which are supportive of the diverse livelihood needs of numerous users, while at the same time protecting the long-term productive capacity of resources. Experience however, shows as indicated by Songorwa et al. (2000) that central government agencies often resort to regulation and control of resources and are ill equipped to regulate and manage multi-product, multi-

participant resource systems. Other literature indicates that community institutions have been eroded and compromised, to the extent that they cannot manage to take on conservation responsibilities (Barrett et al. 2001). Other weaknesses of involving local communities include failure of national governments to give the communities full responsibility to manage, as well as lack of capacity on the part of the communities (Songorwa et al. 2000). Yet effective management of wildlife resources requires an appropriate mix of local and state institutions and organizations, which would balance public conservation policy interests with local community expectations and aspirations.

An alternative arrangement proposed to complement the populist approach is the rights-based model of sustainable development and management of resources at the local community level. Under the rights-based model, indigenous communities living in and around conservation sites are recognized, and accorded respect as owners of these natural resources. Rights-based management system enables local community people to negotiate access and assert their entitlement to resources, which is an important tool to broker better development opportunities (Inamdar, 1999:2). Proponents of the rights-based model opine that rights-based approach is concerned more with people's entitlements (what they are or ought to be) and they have an inalienable right and the greatest stake and responsibility in the development and sustainable use of the resources in their communities (Farrington 2001 cited in Nhantumbo et al. (2003:7). State agencies are only expected to play a facilitating, mediation and supportive role in educating, resolving disputes and reconciling the interests of different user groups, and providing appropriate legal frameworks to support and reinforce resource use agreements reached among various community interest groups.

For the management of wildlife resources, state agencies must provide adequate scientific knowledge to complement local people's own indigenous know how. Community long-term sustainable livelihood retention depends upon local people's access to information on resource conditions and the effect of different resource use patterns. Under the rights-based framework, alternative income

generation and livelihood retention activities are also encouraged and supported by state bio-diversity conservation agencies and non-governmental organizations, in tandem with public conservation policy. That would moderate or mitigate some adverse effects of conservation policy on community socio-economic conditions.

3.4. Benefits and Challenges of Protected Area Development

Researchers such as Ashton (1991) as well as Cater (2002) have agreed that the success of a protected area development is measured basically in terms of the extent to which nature is effectively conserved. This argument re-emphasizes the notion that governments establish nature reserves primarily for the purpose of conserving natural resources such as wildlife (forest and undomesticated animals) in order to maintain the bio-diversity of the environment. Thus, maintenance of bio-diversity and protection of environmental resources from wanton destruction by the public are basis for rationalizing government's acquisition of land for protection, including the creation of nature reserves and national parks. In addition to this however, protected areas particularly national parks are created to serve multiple-purpose functions. Tolba (1992) cites recreation and ecotourism as the major reasons for establishing national parks and other types of protected areas by governments of less developed countries. Tolba's conceptualizations are supported by Hunter (1997) who posits that national parks have now become major tourist attractions, and indeed constitute the basis for nature and ecological tourism. In his opinion ecological tourism in PAs holds the key to sustainable development in developing countries.

Other writers such as Lindberg and Hawkins (1993) and Eagles (1995) have also indicated that ecotourism through nature reserves is one of the fastest growing sectors of the tourism industry. Governments of many countries thus acquired large tracts of land for development into nature reserves, purposely to attract ecology-minded tourists. If there is local participation, communities can receive tangible economic, infrastructural and social benefits – benefits which are less

likely to leak out of the community (Cater 1994 cited in Williams, 2004). Local socio-economic benefits of protected area ecotourism has been documented both in the form of increased employment opportunities and incomes, communities sharing in the distribution of revenues and compensations. Linderberg and Enriquez (1994) cited several examples of tourism related employment surrounding national parks in Belize, Costa Rica and Nepal. In Nepal for instance, two-thirds of Sagarmatha's National Park's resident families receive guiding, selling local goods and clothes, and providing accommodation for tourists (Wells, 1993 cited in Linderberg and Enriquez, 1994). In addition to socio-economic benefits, protected area tourism also contribute to improved intercultural appreciation and understanding both for communities around National Park vicinity and for tourists (Williams, 2004:249). Protected area tourism may also instill a sense of local pride to villagers (Cater, 1994) and may promote or strengthen cultural heritage (Brandon, 1996 cited in Williams 2004). Examples of such positive contributions have been documented for Annapurna, Nepal (Gurung & De Coursey, 1994); Thailand (Brockelman & Dearden, 1990) cited in Williams (2004) and Kakum, Ghana (Abane et al, 1999).

According to Bushell & Eagles (2007) the promise of protected area ecotourism is that the financial benefit accruing from foreign tourist may be utilized in financing the management of national parks to conserve the natural resources that eco-tourists willingly pay to experience. This thus confers economic value on conservation and protection of natural areas, thus presenting a potential for sustainable development approach to development. Dei (2000) also argues that the impact of conservation and national park tourism activities on resident communities can be positive, if first of all, there is local participation in the administration of the park, which must promote development of income generating activities to increase people's purchasing power and improve their standard of living.

Several writers have indicated the benefits of national parks in relation to protected area ecotourism as an important tool for rural development. Referring

to the Okavango region of north-western Botswana, Mbaiwa (2002) notes that protected area ecotourism has stimulated the development of a variety of allied infrastructure and facilities such as hotels, airports and airstrips as well as lodges and camps. The writer particularly attributes the development of tarred roads and communication facilities in the Ngamil District to ecotourism at the national parks.

Conservation of floral and faunal resources, by legislation is often based on democratic and deterrence concepts of protecting nature, which governments use to justify why individuals or communities must be restrained from pursuing short-run selfish interest. Notwithstanding this, Sellars (1997) argues that environmental policies of most governments in the developing world frequently present a paradoxical model in the history of nature preservation. National Parks are normally created, not merely to maintain environmental bio-diversity, but to serve *de facto* corporate profit interest based on tourism. Butler's (1991) & Young's (1992) conceptual models on Conservation, Tourism and Sustainable Development have supported Sellars's assertion with several examples where governments tended to over- emphasize the economic benefits of nature protection rather than its non-economic values such as environmental development. The National Parks of East Africa have been cited by Smith (1990) to illustrate rural areas that have been developed almost exclusively for their ability to attract international tourists who contribute to the foreign exchange earnings of the countries. Kenya, according to Olinda (1991) is one country that particularly earns so much in foreign revenues from her national and game parks, and marine reserves. Kenya is the world's foremost ecotourism attraction. Some 650 000 people visit Kenya's parks and protected areas each year, spending about \$350 million (Olinda, 1991:1).

3.4.1 Challenges of Protected Areas

Despite its socio-economic and cultural significance, Sharpley and Telfer (2002) observes that there is yet a lot of debate on whether national parks with

ecotourism activities truly benefits all involved, especially the local communities. Established in 'isolated' regions according to McNeely (2001), policies on protected areas have been implemented often by top-down approaches, disrupting resident peoples' livelihood sources through conflicts over the control of natural resources. Such environmental and conservation policies have often promoted tension and environmental disruption under the prevalent rhetoric of nature protection and tourism development. It is not surprising therefore that, in spite of the numerous references made to the overall benefits of protected areas (particularly national parks) Jafari (1997) and Parris (1997) rightly indicate that efforts made by governments to conserve lands for wildlife conservation have often been resisted by the host communities.

Often the relationship between local communities and protected area resource use, particularly, in locations common to ecotourism sites is one where dependence on wildlife resource exploitation is high and thus attempts to regulate or prohibit resource use may be antagonistic to local people (Williams, 2004:246). In the view of Wells et al (1992:1) most protected areas are often established with little or no regard for local people and this drives the local population towards the perception of protected areas as restricting their ability to earn a living. Populist advocates point out that poaching and underground activities at national parks and protected areas are symptomatic of people's reaction to a policy of conservation and management of wildlife resources, which excludes communities that affect and are affected by the consequences of the establishment of protected areas.

Inappropriate land acquisition by governments has also been observed by Dei (2000) as one of the challenges of protected areas as it serves as the basis for community opposition or aversion to the development of nature reserves. Due to lack of education and inclusion, local people often perceive protected areas as an alien concept that tends to deny them access to resources which are fundamentally important for their survival. Bussell and Eagles (2007) similarly recognize the seizure of resources to be one of the major challenges towards

conservation and protected area development as it becomes the principal source of local community discontent and resistance to government's environmental initiatives. Rural communities, according to the writers, see their environmental resources as the foundation of their security, opulence or power and wealth; hence the seizure of such resources by the state for public use constitutes a violation of their fundamental rights. Dei (2000) in his contribution to challenges associated with protected areas such as national parks observes that local residents become so much disgruntled and begin to resent national parks especially when they are no longer permitted to use the resources of the protected areas.

Other writers including Mbaiwa (2002) and Dearden (1991) tend to lay emphasis on inadequate compensation for the people's land and for their crops that are often destroyed by the protected wildlife as the root causes of conflicts between the host communities and Park management in developing countries. The authors have observed that the problems and conflicts frequently experienced in protected areas (PAs) are at times exacerbated by the policy of most Park Management authorities to consciously disregard or undermine the importance of local people involvement in the management of the parks. This assertion has been corroborated by Eagles et al (2002) who indicate that land tenure is an important issue that will continue to cause problems for protected area development.

Protected Areas face unprecedented opportunities as well as challenges as outlined above. But the real challenge as indicated by McNeely (1994:403) remains at the local level, where the relationship between local people and resources is putting new pressures on protected areas and calling for new and more collaborative relationship between protected areas and local communities in the establishment and management process. Protected areas should have to be linked more effectively to sustainable development as far as local communities are concern.

3.5 Need for Review of Land Acquisition Agreements

The signing of land acquisition agreements between governments and owners or custodians of the land normally precedes the creation of nature reserves. While not disputing the documentary importance of the agreements, Williams and Shaw (2002; 1991) lament the fact that several of such agreements arranged between local communities and governments in connection with such lands acquired as protected nature reserves have been signed between governments and local rulers, most of whom are illiterates. Due to this they (local rulers) may not be well informed about the implications of land acquisition. Generally the agreements do not anticipate any negative socio-economic and physical developments, especially the problems that are normally associated with land shortage, such as (i) rapid population growth, and (ii) the involvement of better land-use opportunities due probably to improved education of local residents.

Collins, (1998) also observes that it is not known whether both parties usually clearly understand the agreements before signing them, and that there are few instances where governments have reviewed such agreements with later generations of landowners. Reviews of some sort sometimes take place following the occurrences of serious conflicts between the current owners or occupiers of the land and Park conservation officials representing government. The residents frequently bring much pressure to bear on conservation authorities, compelling the latter to address pertinent problems such as granting of concessions to the local communities to obtain fuel-wood or mushroom from protected areas. Instances of such occurrences have been reported by Ndlovu and Mashumba (1998) in Zimbabwe where the Shangaan people were poaching extensively from the Gonarezhou National Park. Hostilities towards the wildlife and conservation authorities ceased in the 1990s when the latter negotiated special reform packages which included employment opportunities and compensation schemes for victims of wildlife attacks. In addition, community members became involved more than ever before in Park management and administrative activities.

Similar review packages in Zimbabwe are cited by Dhliwayo (1998) who indicates that Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) was explicitly set up to empower local communities by allowing them to manage wildlife resources in their respective areas, and to determine their own economic benefits. The initiative was successful because funds generated by the local residents were made available for the development of local clubs and community cultural events such as traditional ceremonies, all of which raised feelings of self-confidence and community self-reliance and pride, culminating in the enhancement of community cooperative spirit.

The experiences of the Gonarezhou National Park and the success story of Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE have both been acknowledged and given credence in the works of other writers such as Diegues (1994) and Scheyvens (1999a) who inferred that protected area ecotourism would continue to generate conflicts, unless governments regularly reviewed land acquisition agreements. To forestall any negative and violent responses from local people, Dei (2000) suggest that local population and indigenous people should always be involved in nature conservation decision-making processes, and that opportunities for the control of protected area ecotourism activities must be in their hands. Conflicts between local residents and nature conservation authorities, in the opinion of Berry and Ladkin (1997), will persist until governments recognise the need to continuously review land acquisition agreements with surviving generations of land owners; such reviews must be carried out in a manner that would enable the people to realise positive benefits from the projects.

Quaye (2001) suggests that the best way to save tropical forests (or ecosystems) is not by the show of brute force or by resorting to the use of abstract legislative instruments, but rather by directly involving the forest local people themselves in the management and care of their environments. Acknowledging the efforts of Ryan (1995), Quaye concludes that a nature protection movement that promotes the participation of the local people in the protection process has brighter chances of success than one that excludes them. The implication is that conservation

authorities of parks (acting on behalf of government) must involve direct local participation right from conservation policy development (including land acquisition process) to implementation as well as evaluation in order to win the full cooperation of the local people who are the original owners of the land and its resources.

The next section focuses on the methodological discussion of the study

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on how the research was designed, conducted and the main methodological issues. It entails the main sources of data and data collection strategies. The methods employed in the study are intended to explore and capture the local community's perceptions of the creation of the Mole National Park and its on-going activities in their area. The study employed two methodological approaches within the qualitative domain in order to gather data from key informants.

4.2 Research Design

In order to explore the perceptions, expectations and opinions of the local people of the MNPA a case-study approach was chosen and employed qualitative descriptive research as its strategy. The research was designed as such to enable me employ triangulation of various sources of data collection methods in order to obtain reliable data and achieve the main objectives of the study. The design helps in collecting valuable data for the study, the analysis and presentation. Various sources of qualitative data collection methods were therefore, employed in order to obtain a reliable data that helps in achieving the stated objectives of the study. For, multiple sources of evidence improve the quality of the study by providing multiple sources of the same phenomenon, thus increasing the level of validity (Osuala, 2001). Basically, although qualitative methods dominated in the data collection process quantitative methods were employed to obtain the demographic characteristics of respondents.

4.3 Method and Data Collection Strategies

Generally, the fieldwork was conducted during late October to early December 2009 in Mole in the Northern region of Ghana. The data collection strategies used in the study was based mainly on a selection of qualitative methods. This

focused on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data are data collected through first hand observation for the first time by the researcher itself while secondary data are collected through other individuals or organizations but not by the researcher itself (Holland and Compbell, 2005). The primary sources of data instruments employed consisted interviews, focus group discussions, informal discussions and observation. Other methods employed was to make use of relevant secondary data and this includes first hand references to official documents from the park management (staff of Game and Wildlife Department), library research, and local and national agencies among others.

While there is a polarization along the lines of qualitative and quantitative research methods in the field of research, some contributions especially those by post-modernist thinkers strongly argue for a hybrid approach. This therefore, poses the problem of choice among the appropriate research approach to be adopted in conducting social science research. Arguments by the post-modernist thinkers have indeed influenced to a large extent the recent methodological developments leading to the emergence of a hybrid approach, the defining characteristics of which is the flexibility it allows the researcher in combining both qualitative and quantitative research techniques (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2005 in Assefa, 2007:32). Both methods according to Osuala, (2001: 170) may appear to be opposites, derived from different philosophies but conform to accepted standard tools of research and can supplement each other, and providing alternative insights into human behaviour.

The qualitative methods adopted for this study allowed me not only to explore the local peoples' perception on issues of the Mole National Park but also to help analyze this in the context of the community's participation in the management of the Park project. The study also necessitated a qualitative approach due to the character of in-depth analysis that was required to guide and support the construction of the main study objective. Strauss and Corbin (1990) cited in Marie C. Hoepfl (1997:02) argue that qualitative methods can be used to understand any phenomenon about which little is yet known. They can also be

used to gain new perspectives on things about which much is already known, or to gain more in-depth information that may be difficult to convey quantitatively (ibid).

The qualitative consideration was therefore based on the fact that data collection and protocols under qualitative design are often informal, flexible and subject to large variations in application. A significant aspect of the research focused on the perceptions, feelings and expectations of local people at the MNPA. It was therefore worthy exploring hard facts of the situation and experiences of the local people as well as some employees of the Park about the Park project with regards to the development of the area.

4.4 Preparations and Formalities

A lot of groundwork usually needs to be done when a researcher prepares for field work. The choices a researcher makes during this period can be crucial for the way in which s/he will be able to carry out the actual fieldwork. This relates not only to financial and logistical issues such as transportation challenges, and sorting out suitable places to stay. More importantly also, it relates to the way a researcher is introduced to the people s/he is going to interview or collaborate with in the field, and thereby how they perceive the researcher's role in the local community.

Preliminary work on the research therefore, commenced with formal and informal negotiation for permission from the leadership of the targeted communities, as well as from the Park's management. The first contacts were made with local political leaders and assembly members of the community with the assistance of my research assistant, who had lived and worked there before. These leaders then led the researcher to the various community chiefs and their elders. The chiefs and their elders therewith granted the permission and I plunged into the local communities for the commencement of the field work.

4.5 The interview situation

As an interview situation in many aspects certainly is often characterized as an act of responding to questions, most of the interviews would be developed in dialogues as mentioned earlier. A total of 40 respondents were interviewed using the interview guide to make sure that interviewees were asked similar questions. The first part of the interview consisted of a face-to-face interview with respondents containing in open-ended questions. This gave respondents the opportunity of active engagement in the interview process. It is said in research literature that 'respondents' are active holders of knowledge and responsible for the construction of the ethnographic text (Long 1992). The purpose was to examine and measure as well as observe the opinions, perceptions, expectations and feelings about the park's effects on the socio-economic conditions of the local communities.

From the local residents, the interviews sought information on the demographic and socio-economic background (gender, age and residential history or length of stay), the current level of local participation in the management of the park, and the benefits (development initiatives) and problems that the local people have encountered as a result of the establishment of the National Park. I was primarily interested in the demographic characteristics that are of importance when dealing with issues of perception on one hand and participation and community resource management for development on the other hand. I therefore took serious cognizance of the ages and gender of respondents to be able to make categorizations that would offer varied feedback based on individual experiences, expectations and observations regarding issues of the Mole National Park.

It was important to me to have a structure and a clear idea of what questions to ask and get an answer to, but I was also prepared to be flexible if the interview took an unexpected turn that led us to relevant topic outside of the prepared interview guide. I tried as much as I could to create an informal and positive atmosphere to emphasize that my aim was not to scrutinize the respondent, but I

have a genuine academic interest obtaining insight from the view point on the subject matter. I also tried as much to avoid leading questions to enable the respondent to emphasize the areas he/she feels are important. The interviews were consciously recorded as field notes and for in analysis.

4.6 Primary Sources of Data

4.6.1 Interviews

I used semi-structured and open-ended interviews to gather information from respondents. This method permitted me to probe to unearth the views of the local people on the establishment of the conservation project, the Park. The open-ended interviews were helpful as the majority of the inhabitants were illiterates and their ability to read and understand questionnaires was in doubt. Also, qualitative interviews using in depth, open-ended interviews can be worked into a conversational flow and this helped me to probe and encourage informants to give their own explanations ((Wilhite et al, 2001:160). I did this by asking follow up questions that opened the chance for the conversational flow.

The interviews were administered to local community inhabitants and some park employees. I conducted interviews with local people living around the Mole National Park. For the purposes of this study, 'local people' encompasses the respondents who have lived in the vicinity of the park area for not less than 10 continuous years and are the local descendants of those who released the land to government the creation of the park. Their communities are located not more than 5km from the park's boundary. The 10-year minimum residential threshold exposure is on the assumption that it is long enough for residents to be sufficiently subjected to the impact of the Park project. The distance was also set after careful observation on the assumption that the closer a community is to the park, the greater the level of interaction between them. Hence the distance from the Park and length of stay are variables likely to influence respondents' opinions, expectations and experiences about the Park resource.

4.6.2 Informal Talks

I also conducted interviews and informal discussions with nine public and local officials to ascertain their views on the subject matter. This included employees of the Ghana Wildlife Division (the management staff of Park) as well as other Local Government Authority officials and other people of the community that I chanced. The informal talks served several purposes in the study. Firstly, part of the preparations prior to the actual interviews took form as informal talks with local opinions leaders (religious leaders and traditional leaders). This helped to backing up my secondary data and to get an updated view of the activities and the impact of the eco-tourism/conservation project on the rural communities. This group of informants was purposely selected for, as local opinion leaders they are seen to be equipped with relevant information regarding the main issues pertaining to the activities around the park area.

I regularly walked around in the Park communities and talked to people I meet on my rounds randomly provided they were ready for a talk. Intermittently some of them also approached me and I used that opportunity to source more information from them. Opportunity was therefore created to have more informal conversations that provided me much contextual insight into the general issues of the national park and how it affects the socio-economic needs of the local communities. I also had informal discussions with a few accidentally captured tourists to seek their impressions about the local communities and the park. It is worthy reiterating that the informal talks during the field work took place before, during and after what was meant to be the actual interview.

4.6.3 Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was used to generate data from relevant groups. These meetings were arranged separately for men and women groups. Two meetings were organized for women and one for men. The arrangement was intended to ensure that both male and female participants freely expressed themselves at every sitting. It was easy to arrange group meetings with the

women compared to the men. For the women already had organized groups engaged especially in Shea butter production and other economic activities supported by the Park management and also know each other. Questions were posed and participants responded individually and through discussions in the group. I also did encourage participants to raise issues they deem were important to them in relation to the subject matter. Compared to men, women at these meetings were very vocal and had many opinions about issues of the Mole National Park. The composition of participants included local small scale Shea-butter and *Gari* producers, peasant farmers, and craft makers. These groups are involved in various income generating activities and some of them are sponsored by the Dutch Government in collaboration with the Park management.

The scheduled discussions also helped the researcher to obtain information on the benefits or otherwise that the local people have derived and continue to derive from the Park resource. This information bordered on micro-finance support, employment and the provision of social amenities such as health facilities, school structures, recreational facilities and water supply. The discussion strategy enabled participants to relatively freely interact and express their opinions and perceptions on various issues about the Park project. I made cautious recordings through notes taking of answers and some times had to confide in my assistance for some clarifications to be sure of the impulse of the responses that are given.

4.6.4 Observation

As Silverman (2001:46) opines, social science is about the routine rather than what appears to be exciting. He further notes that the aims of observation are seeing from the perspective of the people being studied, to describe the situations, to place and describe according to wider social and historical context, and to see the process of what goes on. Observation then entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours and artifacts in a social setting (Marshall and Rossman 1995:79). Observation was therefore essential in order to

gain an understanding of the Park site; and the situations, behaviours, lived experiences and everyday lives of the local people in the Park vicinity. This technique was also essential and became an advantage due to my relative difficulty in the language of study area.

In the first few days of stay, I observed the organization of the park community to acquaint myself with the communities around the park's vicinity and life there in general. This also provided me with some useful contacts within the settlements and afforded me the opportunity to observe the activities, behaviours and artifacts around the Park area. I observed by revealing my intentions to them as way to build a trusting relationship with them. I expressed my willingness to learn from them and seeing things their way. It was very common to see bush burning usually in the evenings and the observation I made revealed that the local people were involved in this activity either to clear the land for crop cultivation or to poach animals. I regularly walked about in the park communities, visited some homes, and ate the various greens, home-made, butter bread or cakes (*kose: a flat rounded mass of beans dough that is fried*) and drunk some *pito* (*a local alcoholic beverage brewed from guinea corn or maize*). This socialization process further gave me opportunity to make personal observations about the local people–Park relationship. Observation was therefore necessary in order to add to the validity of the data that was collected through the use of other methods like interviews, focus group discussions and informal talks.

4.7 Secondary Sources of Data

The study also made use of secondary data including official records of Park management, Game and Wildlife Department and other official publications. This involves management plans, and annual reports among others. The secondary data also involves an archival research from books, journals, magazines, newspapers, articles, internet materials and other related researches. The essence is to review literature which served as both theoretical and empirical

base for the analysis of the data collected. This undoubtedly was associated with some challenges (See below: Field Experience and challenges).

4.8 Sampling Procedure

The primary issue is to generate data which are valid and reliable, independent of the research setting. The way to achieve this is random selection of the interview sample (Silverman, 2001:86). Practically 40 respondents were selected based on random or accidental and strategic or purposive sampling strategies within each category of respondents. Random and strategic sampling was applied to select local community members (interviewees) while they were in their homes and field activities. The respondents were selected in a manner that ensured a best possible representative sample in terms of age, gender, occupational activity, period of stay as well as distance to park area (See: Demographic Features of Respondents).

In interviews with men I sometimes ensured that women were present and supplemented information and vice versa. In the case of women I learnt that it is socially unacceptable in some households to interview women without the presence of men or husbands for that matter. The selection took into consideration house location within the community as the study area is spatially dispersed and the housing architecture is also designed haphazardly. This was necessary to obtain spread geography within the 5km border and ensured variations in people's background. I also adopted a method by which I interviewed people I met accidentally on my rounds in the community once a potential respondent agreed to participate.

I also selected to include in the sample local officials, local community opinion leaders and officials of Park project using purposive sampling technique. This was relevant on the assumption that this category of key informants has a fair idea of key issues and would possibly give appropriate data especially on Park project and activities, community participation and sustainable development. This was also helpful as it was identified in an early phone call that the local

community is less informed about issues of conservation, environment and sustainable development. Kumeckpor (1989) cited in Mensah (1997) asserts that with purposive sampling, the sample units are selected based on random procedure but intentionally selected for the study. This is based on the fact that they have certain characteristics that suit the study or because of certain qualities they possess, which are not randomly distributed in the universe but necessary for the study. This technique was applied in selecting local officials, community opinion leaders as well as some focus groups. The ways interviewees were selected partly depended on my subjective evaluation of who fell within my target respondents that will make the data more representative.

4.9 Field Experience and Challenges

The local people living in and around the Mole National Park appear warm, hospitable and very friendly. Notwithstanding these attributes the research faced some limitations and challenges. One fundamental of such was how to readily access respondents to be interviewed. This was due to the fact that the respondents were busy on their farms as the research coincided with the raining/farming season, and others were also engaged in commercial activities in village markets in the District. Evenings appeared to be more appropriate after they had returned home from the farm or market. This equally had some challenges as most of them especially the women, were always busy preparing evening meals for the family. This called for rescheduling of interviews and it was time consuming. Some respondents also demanded payment or immediate benefit for their participation. Even agreement to be interviewed was not a guarantee, as some potential respondents simply did not show up at all or at the appointed time.

There is usually a chance of posing leading questions when conducting interviews and the interviewee might feel obligated to answer a question in a certain way in order to please the interviewer. In my interviews with the local residents I felt that my 'euro-centric' studies background affected some of

respondents' responses despite my attempts to create an open atmosphere. In the beginning of my stay answers to questions I posed to respondents were often short and it appeared as if some wanted to give 'positive' answers even though I had assured them of anonymity. As time went on however, respondents were open as they became familiar with me and gave in-depth explanations to questions. Interestingly, these problems did not occur in the focus group discussions where people expressed more critical views in an open manner.

There was also the problem of language as the majority of the respondents was illiterates and did not speak English. This was addressed by employing the services of a field assistant, Mr. Kuoribo Anthony whom I knew and he contacted the area even before my arrival. He had worked in the park community for some time and hails from a neighbouring district in the Upper West region of Ghana. I also have a fair understanding of the local language (Gonja) and conducted interviews, focus group and informal discussions with key informants. The research assistant however helped translating questions in advance of interviews and making clarifications of for example, proverbs as he was always present. Care was therefore, taken in order to have an understanding of the translation before note taking as this could be problematic.

In addition, the institutions or departments were unable to readily make available enough documented materials necessary for later analysis. Most government institutions in Ghana especially those that have income generating components such as tourism in this case treat their documents confidentially and officials are reluctant in disclosing to outsiders. That might be a contributory factor to their inability to readily make available to me materials and documents related to the Park resource. Some of the local officials however took my contact address and later posted some documents to me. It worthy indicating that some of them are in bits and quite unorganized and this creates a challenge in using them for analysis.

Another significant limitation that is worthy of noting based on my experience, is time and financial constrain. I fell sick upon arrival and this delayed the

commencement of the fieldwork as I needed to be fit. In view of that I had to postpone my flight return date and this also involved financial challenge as a self-funded student researcher without any scholarship.

One other issue that kept on cropping up during the fieldwork was the issue of assuring respondents especially the elderly, of their anonymity. Respondents were quick to ask for assurances from the researcher that no information would be revealed in the final report or any subsequent publications which could lead to their identification and/or arrest. In my view, they were sensitive because there is a perception that some especially elders took benefited financially in the process of the park establishment. Also, some also suspicion that the researcher was coming from a security outfit and that such interviews can lead to their arrest.

The next section is the presentation of data on the general characteristics of the respondents

5 General Characteristics of Respondents

5.1 Introduction

This section presents the general characteristics (socio-demographic data) of the respondents. A total of 40 respondents were covered by the field work. Of the 40 respondents, 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted with local community members, 3 focus group discussions with separate groups of men and women and 9 purposively selected individuals of the community made up of some opinion leaders and park officials. This covers discussions on socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The variables examined and discussed include age and sex, household size, duration of residence and occupation of respondents.

5.1.1 Age Distribution and Sex of Respondents

The age of a respondent is important and has influence on the way people perceive things especially with regards to expectations and opinions of local people about the presence of a community resource and its management. Age is equally an important factor to consider when it comes to peoples levels of participation in activities of a project with policy objectives aimed at sustainable development of their communities. I therefore took serious cognizance of the age group and gender of respondents to be able to make categorizations that would offer varied feedback based on individual experiences, expectations and observations regarding the activities and management of the Mole National Park. Even though the study captured most male respondents, it equally captured female (17) respondents representing approximately half of the sampled respondents of the study as shown below in the table.

Table 1: Age Distribution and Sex of Respondents

Age Group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
19-45	14	12	26	65
46-60	6	4	10	25
61 and above	3	1	4	10
TOTAL	23	17	40	100

Source: Field survey, 2008

The youngest respondent was 19 years of age and the oldest was 65 years. The data generated from the fieldwork as outlined in the table reveals that 65 per cent of the respondents fall under the age group of 19-45 years encompassing both male and female. This age group represents the active population who are in various forms of employment. The majority as shown in the table (65%) being the active population, suggests that larger proportion of the local population were old enough to have witnessed the acquisition of their land by government for the community ecotourism project. This explains why they form the majority of respondents of the study. This statistics as outlined is suggestive of the presence of many young people in the community. The youthfulness of the population implies that there is and also in some few years time, there would be increased demand for physical and socio-economic infrastructure necessary to satisfy the youth. This entails health facilities (clinics), schools, access roads and employment opportunities. The effects of these expectations on the park resource, especially in a predominantly illiterate and agrarian population, are easily predictable.

The table also shows that 25 per cent of the respondents are within the age class of 46-60 and it is in this group that most formal workers and traditional opinion leaders belong. This group has lived in the area for long and continues to live there. They have substantial experience with regards to the establishment of the

park resource, its activities and other issues regarding ‘park and local people relationship’.

5.1.2 Household Size of Respondents

In very simple terms the household is a domestic unit that is normally referred to an individual or group of people who share living space and/or take at least some meals together. This domestic unit according to Mackintosh (1988) as cited in Gardener (1997) is usually organized around human needs which have social, cultural, historical and psychological dimensions. These socially constructed needs as they further opine, include the basic necessities of life (food, shelter, and clothing), cleanliness, sex, reproduction, companionship and recreation. The composition of the household includes parents, children as well as other dependants living under the same roof and at least sharing some meals together. The household in my view taking cognizance of its complexity as in the case of the Mole park area, it is difficult to assign a definite definitive value to it due to cultural underpinnings. Hence for the purpose of this study I may consider it as both of the family groups that may or may not live together under one roof and eat from the same pot. For instance, by way of local culture, it is incumbent on one member of the family to extend to his/her kinsfolk whenever they are in need. This cultural requirement therefore makes the boundaries of the household quite flexible in this area.

Table 2: Household Size of Respondents

H/H Size	Number	Percentage (%)
0-5	25	62.5
6-10	10	25
11-15	3	7.5
16-20	2	5

Total	40	100
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Source: Field survey, 2008

Among the number as shown in the table 7.5 per cent (11-15) people and 5 per cent (16-20) people possess quite a large household size. In addition, 25% had a household size of 6-10 whilst 62.5% had a household size of 0-5. From this statistics it implies that most community members belong to large household in the study community and this is basically due to the extended family system which enjoins adult family members to help in catering for children of extended deceased relatives. This is also attributable to the prestige most local people associate with having more wives and children in the study area. As farming is the predominant occupation of community members, having an extended family or more wives and children means an assurance of labour force for farming activities. It is in this context Rakodi (2002) opines that the household size or composition is a determinant factor of capabilities, choices and strategies available to it.

5.1.3 Duration of Residence of Respondents in the Area

To determine the level of exposure of respondents to the conservation resource, it was appropriate to find out how long subjects have been living in their current places of abode. As indicated earlier in the introduction, the study set a minimum of 10 years of continues residence in community, Mole National Park Area (MNPA) as a condition for participation as a respondent. For background information therefore, the study sought how long each respondent had stayed in the study area and their level of awareness about the community resource (national park), its management and related activities that affect them as hosts. It is helpful for purposes of accurate analysis to identify whether respondents know about and are exposed to the cultural environment, arena, or the situation or experience under study. Hence the study enquired about how long the local community members (sampled respondents) had stayed in the study area. This was done on the assumption that persons who have stayed longer in the

community are more likely to be knowledgeable and exposed to the impact of the conservation project than persons who have lived in the villages for shorter periods of time. Table 3 provides a summary of respondents' length of continuous residence in the study community.

Table 3: Period of stay in the Mole Area

No. of Years Lived in the Area	Absolute Figure	Percentage
10-15	2	5
16-20	4	10
21-30	10	25
30 and above	25	60
Total	40	100

Source: Field survey, 2008

The majority of respondents (60%) had resided in the study area for longer period of time. This thus suggests that respondents of age 30 years and above are persons who have so far spent most of their time living in the MNPA. This is a supportive indication that the study captured respondents who have considerable level of knowledge and exposure about the study area and the subject under scrutiny. Sampled persons who have been living in the area for between 10 and 15 years are 2 (5%) while 4 (10%) of respondents have lived in the study community for between 16 and 20 years. Among those respondents that have lived in the community for between 10 and 15 years as well as 16 and 20 years include those who have been deployed there to work such as the park officials. Respondents among the park officials included the Law Enforcement Officer, Projects Officer and Game Guards. This group of key informants was asked about the management and administration of the park and related issues such as park-local people relationship among others. The majority of respondents who

have lived in settlements around the park for 30 years and above are 25 (60%). This is indicative that the study sought to access information through a reliable historical perspective with well-informed sampled participants.

5.2 Occupational Activities of Respondents

The occupational activities of sampled respondents were also examined by the study in order to have an overview of their main economic activity(s) as well as source of livelihood. This would also help to give a reflection on the level of local community involvement in conservation and the management of the park and related eco-tourism project.

Table 4: Occupational Activities of Community Members (Respondents)

Occupational Activity	Male	Female	Total	Percentage (%)
Farming	23	3	26	65
Non-Farming	4	10	14	35
Total	27	13	40	100

Source: Field survey, 2008

The settlements in the MNPA are basically subsistence economies dependent on agriculture and forest products. The examination of the occupational activities of the sampled respondents indicates that farming is the predominant preoccupation of most local community members in the study area. In general, farming, foodstuffs selling, petty-trading and housekeeping are the main activities of majority of the respondents. Agricultural-processing is a fairly important activity in the area. From the table 2 above 65% of the respondents (26) are engaged in farming and its related activities and 35% (14) engaged in non-farming activities. It further shows that whereas 23 out of 27 male are engaged in farming and its related activities, 4 are engaged in non farming activities which include trading, transport business and teaching. On the part of female respondents, 3 out 13 were

engaged in farming and related activities such as *gari*-processing, Shea-butter extraction and food preservation among others, 10 were engaged in non-farming activities which basically involve income generating activities such as trading.

In general as depicted in the table, farming and its related activities such as crop cultivation, livestock rearing, fishing and agricultural processing are the main activities of the local people. They are small-scale or subsistent farmers who depend on their own household labour service as well as unreliable rainfall pattern rendering the main occupation insecure. As was the perception and revelation by respondents, farmland accessibility to household in the area is fast diminishing and this is attributable to the establishment and further expansionary activities of the park project. It may not be far from right to also indicate as an observation by the researcher that the farmland situation could be as a result of increases in sizes of household due to uncontrolled population growth.

It is also suggestive from the data that majority of the female respondents are engaged in non-farming activities and this is associated with cultural and traditional norms. For females in the study area do not have control over household productive activity such as farming and also females can not possess land due to the nature of acquisition of land in the study area. Land is acquired or owned through the practice of patrilineal inheritance in which land is passed on from fathers to sons excluding daughters. The only way as a solution to this predicament for the women is to resort to income generating activities to make ends meet. In general therefore it may be safe to indicate that the population in the study area (MNPA) is very poor and completely dependent on the land and forest resources in the area.

5.3 Summary

This section provided an organized presentation of data gathered for the study in order to describe, analyze and discuss the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents targeted by the field work. Respondents consisted of male and female as well as differing age groups in order to be able make categorizations

that would offer varied feedback on the subject matter based on experiences, observations and expectations. From the data generated as discussed above, it is evident that most of the respondents were in the age bracket of 19-45 years. It has also been shown that the least age group represented belongs to age 60 and above. It is also revealed that majority of the respondents are self employed comprising (65%) male engaged in farming whereas 35% of female engaged in non-farming activities especially, income generating activities. It also came to light that respondents have large household size which has implications ranging from more children as household labour to diminishing access to farm lands.

The next two chapters are devoted to the presentation, discussion and analysis of the research findings according to the objectives of the study in relation to the conceptual models adopted.

6. Initiatives, Expectations and Perceived Challenges

6.1 Introduction

This chapter entails a presentation of data gathered and analysis of the research findings from the study site, the Mole National Park area in Northern Ghana. The presentation and discussion of the findings focus on the local community's perceptions, expectations and opinions on the creation and management of the national park and the extent to which its programmes have affected the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the local people. It presents the analysis and discussions of the research findings according to the stated objectives of the study as indicated in chapter 1. The analysis explains and discusses the findings in a broader scope using relevant theoretical and conceptual models as well as issues from related works undertaken by other researchers. The data analysis shall be presented thematically to reflect the coverage of the objectives of the study.

Local people's perceptions, opinions and expectations of the establishment and management issues of the Mole Park project were investigated. Local community's participation in the designation procedure and decision-making processes as well as the impact of the project's tourism development on the local community among other issues was considered of priority to the study. Ensued potential conflicts due to the level of local people's involvement were also considered. The need for a new management scheme with the greater participation of local community members in the decision-making process on Park issues was revealed, supported mainly by the youth and women population. Finally, the results indicated that the information derived from such research could help managers of protected areas to consider as paramount community participation for the success of community resource management and also to resolve arising nature reserve related conflicts.

6.2 The Park Project: Development Initiatives and Expectations

Environmental protection by means of Protected Areas (PAs) has been the major approach adopted in Ghana as a means to conserve biological diversity as well as provide ecosystem services. Wildlife conservation policies in Ghana for environmental care within the context of protected areas (national parks) and nature reserves relate to maintaining ecological processes; preserve genetic diversity as well as ensuring sustainable utilization of ecosystems for development. There has been increased attention and effort to conserve the country's physical environment, particularly her fauna and flora since the immediate post colonial era. The aim apart from promoting environmental conservation is also to generate some economic benefits from protected area ecotourism activities. It is in this light that it is argued that protected areas have not been created or designed with the singular intention of reducing poverty. But increasingly, it has been recognized that the establishment and management of protected areas include the obligation to respect basic human rights and *at least do no harm* to resident communities (Fisher, 2003 cited in Bushell & Eagles, 2007:75). This 'do no harm' principle therefore reflects a minimum standard for PA establishment and management not to worsen the living conditions of poor, rural and/or local communities living within and adjacent parks (IUCN, 2003)

Although protected area tourism is seen as a relatively new concept in Ghana, the country has gradually succeeded in establishing a considerable number of nature reserves and parks including the MNP in various parts of the country. Ecotourism has emerged as a desirable form of tourism leading to the creation of nature reserves and national parks and has become one of the top foreign exchange earners in Ghana. Does this unlock opportunities for the poor local people living in and around these nature reserves, whether for economic gain or other livelihood benefits?

6.2.1 Park Public Services to Local Community

In connection with the benefits in the form of public services that the local communities derive directly or indirectly from the Mole National Park respondents were asked to express their assessment in this regard. Some services have been provided in the MNPA by park management to help improve the lives of the local people. One of such is the provision of health care to the local communities. Most informants approximately more than 50% indicated health care as an important service that the Park management has assisted in collaboration with Ghana Health Service to provide for the local communities. The recognition of health service as the Park's most important contribution was the result of the presence of a clinic which was the only health facility that has served the health needs of all the settlements within and around the Park and even beyond. The other important service is the provision of educational facilities. Basic educational needs were catered for by two Primary Schools and two Junior High Schools, located at the Park's headquarters. A few of respondents especially women were of the view that an opportunity to socialize with visitors was indirect beneficial service which could be associated with the establishment of the Park.

A group discussion with some of the inhabitants revealed that people from various walks of life and different nationalities visited the Mole daily, and many more did so annually. This was equally through my discussions with some tourist who were available at the Park. According to local residents, they often receive these visitors into their communities and homes, and this afforded both visitors and hosts the opportunity to interact with one other. Informants were categorical that some natives, both male and female have benefited enormously through this socialization process as it has led to marriages between natives and visitors including Westerners. This assertion was verified through an observation of relationships that existed in the Park area by the researcher.

A section of the respondents were of the view that conservation results are more important especially in terms of public services. Employment opportunities for instance were believed to be one of the potentially important sustainable development gains from the Park's ecotourism project in the study area. Information gathered from respondents on the type of employment local people benefited reveals that local people who have benefited through formal employment are however, very few. This was associated with the 'whom you know syndrome' in Ghana that has engulfed the park management in recruitment exercises. They also gave their opinions which suggested that this situation was as a result of lack of local community people in the park at the management and decision-making level. Majority of employees are forestry guards who are usually employed by the Game and Wildlife Department.

This assertion was however refuted by the management staff indicating that their recruitment is purely on merit and any local residents who meet the requisite criteria is considered just as any other outsider. The park officials also attributed this situation to high illiteracy level among the local people. This was indeed the concern of the local people why they are not usually given some concession as the host of the Park resource. The local people admit to high level of illiteracy but strongly point out that the few who are well educated and qualified are still not considered and they see this to be unfair.

6.2.2 Women Programmes

Increasingly, women's enterprise activities in Ghana which lie within a wide range of informal activities such as agricultural production, food processing, extractive industries, garment/textile, rural craft and petty trading has become major source of employment. Women operate a major sector of these economic activities which has attracted development practitioner's attention with its high potential in reducing poverty. It is in this regard that conservation and wildlife management outfits try to factor such projects or programmes into their management plans to help in reducing poverty in communities that conservation

and ecotourism projects are located. Non-farm activities at the MNPA represent an important means of earning income for women as was observed.

The women programmes cover micro-credits (loans) and group activities that centre on Shea butter extraction, *gari* processing, *pito* brewing, batik tie and dye, pottery and petty trading. These economic activities have been identified by the Park management as source of employment and income for women in the community which contribute to poverty reduction. Some of these activities are not all year round and women adopt strategies in order not to operate at a loss by engaging in them seasonally.

The growth and sustainability of some of these activities depend on the availability of credit in the form of small loans to start with. It is difficult to secure loans from the bank as it requires collateral in the form of land or a house. Unfortunately women in these communities neither own land nor houses. This requirement of collateral renders them unqualified for loans through the mainstream credit facilities. It is in this regard the Park management as a social responsibility instituted the credit schemes to help local communities in their livelihood strategies. The findings of the study reveals that women groups from Larbanga, Mognore and Murugu have benefited and still benefit from this credit facility to engaged in some of these income generating activities. Almost all the respondents interviewed (both male and female alike) attested to the fact that the Park management has taken this particular development initiative seriously. This initiative according to them is easily accessible to groups and that is the reason why the women benefit more than their male counterparts. The women categorically indicated that one could only qualify for the credit assistance through identifiable organized group formation.

Where traditional *gari*-processing and Shea-nut butter extraction methods were labour and resource intensive for instance, with the introduction of low-cost technology from *A Rocha Ghana*, a conservation non-governmental agency in collaboration with Park management, women in the Community Resource

Management Areas (CREMAs) have been able to effectively set up cooperative processing centres for these goods. Most of the women respondents intimated that their productivity has been greatly increased for less labour and less strain on the environment, while simultaneously helping to reduce gender imbalance in manual labour tasks. In addition, where sales and profits in these communities was once limited by lack of effective, reliable transportation, the introduction of donkeys and carts by these initiatives has opened up the CREMA areas and their products to new markets.

Photograph (1): CREMA Women Micro-Credit Group



Source: Fieldwork Photograph

The most recent credit assistance for some of the women groups who are engaged in Shea-butter extraction, craft work and pottery that they received was from the Dutch government in collaboration with the Mole Park management. This was further confirmed by the Park's livelihoods Officer but efforts to ascertain the exact financial strength of the assistance proved futile. The significant thing for me however, was to ascertain the truth or other wise of the development assistance and how it was channeled as means of reducing poverty

in the Mole area. Individual women who benefited from the scheme as well as groups during meetings indicated how positively the development initiatives instituted by the Park management has impacted on them and the community as whole. Local women who have benefited from the assistance said they use the income obtained from the economic activities to improve their living standards as well as for their children. These include household provisions, paying children school fees, purchase of drugs or payment of medical fees, buying kerosene in case of power failure, remitting to support husband's farm work and reinvesting into business to be able to build self-capital among others.

The Mole National Park development initiative in the form of the women's loan credit scheme has contributed to improving the status of women especially, within the household and the society in general as they study revealed. The credit scheme in many households has helped to create harmony because women are in the position to contributing to household budget through the loan proceeds. As they used their credit effectively, it propelled their social status and popularity. Aside being consulted by their spouses on key domestic issues which hitherto did not happen, they were intermittently invited to social functions and also being considered for leadership positions in the locality. In a discussion with the Livelihoods Project Officer (4.11.08), he indicated that *"Our observations show that husbands upon realizing the loans in the hands of their wives and the gains they are making, now exhibit so much respect for the women"*. Women have increasingly become breadwinners of the household and in some cases advance small loans to their husbands for farm work and other long term investment; this has made them to win respect in the society. This is measure to a considerable extent has to lead to empowerment of the women thereby making them self reliant.

In totality, most of the respondents concluded that their economic activities being supported by the Park project are profitable and have led to the improvement of their living conditions in general. As most of them intimated, the ability to feed and cloth their children and other household members as well as acquire personal

belongings makes the contribution of the Park project towards poverty reduction so enormous. This has given women in the study area the opportunity to take part in household decision making, because they are able to provide for the family upkeep.

6.2.3 Conservation Issues

The other important aspect of the credit scheme is the education component. The social education of the project instituted by the Park management keeps them informed about key practices that would help improve their lives in the community as a whole. These include education on family planning, business skills, as well as environmental issues on deforestation (bush burning) and poaching in the park area. A considerable number of respondents alluded to the fact that deforestation has set in and attributed it to bush burning which indeed affects the environment. It is worthy to note that respondents initially presented no views on the environment when they talked on their expectations with regards to the park development. However, with time they have realized the importance of environmental through public education embarked upon by the Park management and its collaborative agencies.

This assertion by the local people is corroborated by *A Rocha International, Ghana* a Christian Nature Conservation organization working in the MNPA. The organization observes that the key conservation concerns within the MNPA come from poaching and bushfires. Hunting and trading of bush-meat is important in the local economy and, as such, has had a serious impact on wildlife populations within the park. During the dry season, bushfires often caused by hunting activities, pass through large areas of the park causing considerable habitat damage (A Rocha 2008 Report).

Production of food crops has also declined and they attribute this to the increase in population and the area is inhabited by people who still depend on traditional farming systems. When contacted on the issue of bush burning at the MNPA the Park authorities confirmed that the practice was a 'ritual'. It was gathered that

each year the inhabitants with the intention to excite early sprouting of grasses in their settlements initiate the practice. The motive is to entice the protected animals to graze in the unprotected freshly grown grass areas where they could be killed. The Park officials in their bit to counter the selfish interest of these local residents authorize the replication of the practice at the Park to keep the animals within the protected area.

Majority of the respondents on the other hand hold the view that the environment is improving because protection and education by the Park authorities is improving. On the issue of environment-poverty relationship they believe that environmental destruction and poverty are related. Poverty is highly related to the environment in that they get their basic necessities from environment resources (forest) and if it is destroyed then they lose their source of livelihoods. On the issue of bush burning which has become a norm in the area, most of them indicated that deforestation among other practices results in decline in animal food, rainfall as well as soil fertility and this leads to decline in food production. Although bush burning was observed as a sign of lack of community cooperation between the local communities and the Park Management, it was intended by the local inhabitants to stimulate early sprouting of annual grasses and leafy herbaceous plants during October and November each year. The sprouted plants served as feed for domestic animals in the dry season.

According to the Park Management (who recommended the practice) the local residents used the freshly sprouted plants to lure protected herbivores to graze outside the protected area where they can be poached. The Park Management therefore instituted a similar practice, referred to as early burning inside the Park, aimed at keeping wildlife safe within the boundaries of the protected territory. Although the Park Management might have good reasons for embarking on early burning, the practice, in my view was not good because it destroyed both plants and animals. The solution to the problem of poaching required a more tactical

approach than early burning which would destabilize the bio-diversity of the area to defeat the purpose of conservation.

With increase in environmental destruction through bush burning, food production decreases and water shortage for animals and humans this will inevitably result in absence of basic needs and poverty for that matter. It is also a truism as supported by some aspects of the conclusions of the Brundtland Commission report which clearly indicate that poverty is a major cause of environmental problems and amelioration of poverty is a necessary and central condition of any effective programme to deal with environmental concerns (Duraiappah, 1998).

The Park resource and its ecotourism project have had a significant benefit for the local people in terms of poverty reduction through development projects, employment and conservation. Development projects such as micro-credit schemes, employment opportunities and conservation are the most important gains of late from ecotourism development in the community. Local communities in the MNPA had a very positive attitude toward ecotourism project. It is interesting to note that local people wanted tourism, but not at the cost of jeopardizing forests or wildlife and displacing people. The findings indicate more support for the park and its tourism activities from people who economically benefit from it like the women groups than from those who do not, such as the men group who will want to poach and hunt the wild animals.

6.2.4 Livelihood Issues in Park Management

The primary goal of establishing most protected areas is to conserve biological diversity and protect ecosystem services as indicated earlier, not necessarily to reduce poverty. However, the growing recognition of the linkages between the creation and management of protected areas and issues of poverty in local communities where protected areas are located has become a necessity practically and ethically. Practical, in the sense that, according to Watkin, (2003) to survive, protected areas in poorer local communities must be seen as a land-

use option that contributes positively to sustainable development as other types of land-use. And ethical, due to the need for human rights and aspirations to be incorporated into national conservation strategies if social justice is to be realized. Hence, there is the need to reconcile land use for conservation and sustainable use of resources at the local level with the livelihoods, opportunities and empowerment of the poor communities.

Aside the issues of social services the study was keenly interested in sustainable development initiatives that have been instituted by the Park management or in collaboration with other agencies to help improve the livelihoods status of the local people. For as it was observed, the daily struggle of these people to survive in the face of poverty is often at odds with efforts to preserve and conserve the area's valuable savannah and wildlife populations. Years of basic human subsistence activities, like hunting and tree-cutting for fuel and lumber, have resulted in severe land degradation and biodiversity loss within Mole.

Livelihood mechanisms have taken place in terms of income-generating projects by way of supporting with micro-credit schemes to help reduce poverty in area. The most pronounced according to my findings was the women micro-credit schemes. *"It is our expectation that the micro-credit schemes would offer women especially to engage in small scale income generating activities that would empower them to some extent"* (Livelihoods Projects Officer, 4.11.08). It is important to reiterate that women in the area are considered as subordinate and dependent on their men folks who have control over resources. Any attempt therefore to make them self reliant is a positive move towards empowerment.

Since 2005 the Resource Management Unit of Mole National Park have been working in collaboration with Drylands/Ecosystems Grant Program of the to Netherlands Committee – IUCN, A Rocha, Ghana to create opportunities for alternative sustainable livelihood in two settlements adjoining the park: Mognore and Murugu. Developed under close collaboration with stakeholders at all levels—from the District Assembly to village elders and ordinary citizens—these

Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) have established legal and constitutional frameworks that guide the process toward integration of natural resource management with already existing local production systems; effectively making communities active managers rather than passive participants in their environment.

In 2008 during the fieldwork CREMA projects were still on-going as this was confirmed by respondents (both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries). The aim of CREMA among others is to involve the community members (for males) in and give them the responsibility of protecting the animals. As part of their duty, they also supervise hunting intermittently and payments made are used for the development of the community. The Park management through the CREMA exercise established bee-keeping projects in Murugu and Mognori and engaged the male inhabitants as a livelihood strategy. Where traditional honey gathering methods regularly contribute to dangerous bush fires, as the trees hosting beehives are usually burnt down to avoid encounters with angry stingers, the CREMA villages have elected people to learn more sustainable bee-keeping practices and marketing skills with the help of A Rocha Ghana. According to A Rocha, Ghana (2008) report, 98 people own 300 beehives to date as a result of these efforts. Honey profits have subsequently increased by 140% and fire belts have been successfully established by these CREMA communities. CREMA is still responsible for the running of the bee-keeping project.

Female respondents however, expressed fewer views on issues relating to wildlife and beekeeping under the CREMA project as compared to issues concerning economic activities. Some of the female informants referred the subject of wildlife and beekeeping to men. This operates within the existing structure of gender relations in which women are not allowed to participate in decision-making on major issues at community level despite their role in resource exploitation. In fact this situation irrespective of the level of women empowerment has traditional underpinnings. However, they indicate that they

CREMA project has helped them a lot through their income generating activities and they see this as an improvement in their social status in the area.

In a discussion with a Park Resource Management Unit Official (*4.11.08*) on environmental education to beneficiaries of the project, he points out that along with the establishment of these alternative livelihood options and tools; both formal and non-formal environmental education has also been integral to the CREMA process. Dramas and workshops emphasizing bush-fire prevention, tree management, and endangered wildlife species have been presented in many communities bordering Mole National Park, especially during festival times, to appeal to children as well as adults. By thus empowering entire communities to be responsible stewards of their own land, the CREMA project has successfully begun to take some of the pressure off Mole National Park, while the economic and environmental situation of the people and communities in the area has also improved.

6.2.5 Expectations of Development Initiatives

Local community members expressed concerns over the promises that were made to them by government as well as their own expectations they had about the Park Project. Five main development initiatives were put to the local residents (respondents) to ascertain their expectations on them. These include Health Facilities (Clinics), Educational facilities (Schools), Income generating projects, water and improved transport/roads. Of the 40 respondents, majority 27.5 per cent of the people had the expectation among others that the creation of the Park resource would contribute immensely to improving the general health delivery in the communities, through the establishment of clinics. A significant number 25 per cent also had the expectation that as the Park was developed educational facilities would be provided to improve upon the existing few as this would help promote basic education. These respondents place so much value on education as they indicate it is the panacea for development.

In the sample, 17.5 per cent of respondents especially women had anticipation that the area would see development through the introduction of income-generating projects to help improve their livelihoods. The provision of sustainable income-generating projects is appropriate because it would serve as an important strategy that can effectively reduce poaching and other trespassers that are frequently committed by local inhabitants in the Park. Income-earning projects such as gardening especially as was observed, attracts the youth of the area, who have migrated to urban centres in search of non-existent or menial jobs, to return home and contribute to the development of their communities. Viable animal production in relation to their desire in grass-cutter, rabbit and poultry rearing as well as the introduction of fast growing woodlots would provide the nutritional needs of inhabitants and halt poaching. This would equally be an incentive for the local inhabitants (especially women) to shun the illegally wandering into the protected area to gather firewood.

A low number of 15 per cent anticipated that the creation of the park project would help them to have access to portable water as some of their water sources have been taken over by the establishment of the park. Besides they are of the view that they saw the Park project as a community development project and therefore would help change their fortunes with regards to basic amenities such as water. The issue of water was re-echoed in a focus group discussion (08.11.08) arranged with some local community members gathered through a planned meeting prearranged at the chief's palace, that a number of water bodies from which the local residents accessed their drinking water were located in the area now protected by the Park. The inhabitants however did not only expect access to water in the Park, but also anticipated and wished for the provision of pipe born water in the community. The importance of portable water in the area can not be over emphasized since the area is designated by the Ghana Health Service as one of the guinea worm endemic areas in the country.

An average of 15 per cent of the informants expected that their communities would be more accessible to the outside world through the provision of access

roads and buses. Accessibility is a key to the area's development as access roads would contribute significantly to promotion of crop cultivation, marketing of produce as well as local craft industry. Access roads would encourage farmers to produce more for local consumption and for sale as buyers from the urban centres would be able to reach every community to buy the products.

The expectations of the male and female local residents are not significantly different as depicted in the sample. This implies that sex and gender differences did not influence the expectations of the informants with regards to development challenges of their communities. The main expectation is that the Park project should help improve their welfare. The notion that the Park project should bring total development in my view clearly shows the lack of involvement, consultation and information with regards to the policy objectives, decision-making and implementation process.

These expectations according the local people stem from the promises that were given to them in the process of developing the Park resource. From the outset the local community appears to feel that it is the Park project and not they themselves as partners, who carry the entire responsibility to initiate development activities. As community members and owners for that matter it is their responsibility to initiate development activities to attract support from the Park management that would lead to improvements in the area. The local people are part of the very component of the Park project but they do not seem to be feeling as such perhaps due to the distance between them and Park management.

6.2.6 Expectations of Benefits from Park Project

With regards to expected benefits from the conservation and ecotourism project of the Park, most of the responses given by respondents indicate that their expectations bordered on socio-economic improvement, local people involvement in the park's administrative and management functions and support in income generating projects. On socio-economic improvement their responses revolved around such issue areas as employment and compensation for damaged

property, development of community tourism, harvest of economic resources at park, access to water sources, opportunity to visit attractions, to hunt for bush meat on occasions, and harvesting grass, termites and clay for cultural activities. On income generating projects, the issues concerned the respondents were charcoal production, micro-finance (especially women), pottery (especially ceramics), rabbit and grass-cutter rearing, poultry keeping and vegetable gardening.

Of the 40 respondents, 25 of the key informants that I interviewed hoped that the Park's authorities would involve the local people in the Park's administrative and management functions. The desire to be involved in the management process were expressed especially in matters relating to employment for the growing youth, building of social infrastructure, transport, wildlife conservation and compensation for any damage to property (and at times lost of life) caused by the protected animals.

Among the community people I talked to it was revealed that they had the expectation that after the creation of the park project the area would experience considerable level of development. This was attributed to the ecotourism project. The development would be through the introduction of community tourism projects; this, according to them would enable the local people to obtain direct economic benefits from the Park. In addition to economic gains, it was hoped that community tourism would occupy the youth and prevent them from migrating to the urban centres in search of non-existent jobs. In his view Watkin, (2003:15) asserts that conservation and ecotourism projects should be designed such that it stands to promote policies and programmes that make local communities the beneficiaries of conservation on their lands, and therefore, partners in conservation rather than adversaries. Watkin was however, quick to emphasize that communities must also accept that investment in conservation and ecotourism is long-term and that benefits both tangible and intangible can take a considerable time to accrue.

Another important expectation expressed by a considerable number of respondents especially, women were the opportunity to harvest fuel-wood, Shea-nuts and *dawadawa* fruits in the protected area. It was learnt and as well observed that the extraction of Shea-butter (from Shea-nuts) and *dawadawa* (from locust beans) has been an important economic activity exclusively for women. This activity according the women has been their traditional source of livelihood which they inherited from their grand parents long before the creation of the Park project. Hence the creation of the park resource has impacted negatively of this particular source of livelihood of theirs as they are not permitted to harvest any fruits in Park vicinity.

A women's leader (*Magazia*) had this to say with regards to the issue of wild fruits: *Harvesting of wild fruits especially Shea-nut and dawadawa has been women's work and we all grew and met it so. Look, women in this area do not have land claim which is reserved for the men and it is only the wild fruits and fuel wood that belong to the women.* Their (park authorities) attempt to deprive us of this source of livelihood continues to generate some level of discontent among the women and it is not fair. A small number of about ten per cent (10%) mainly men, also expressed the desire to practice their traditional activities without any hindrance and these activities include the harvesting of termites for feeding poultry and tall grass for roofing local buildings. Permission to visit some tourist attractions and hunting for bush meat were mentioned by a few respondents.

Based on my observations of the area, it is my view that if human beings especially, the women were permitted to compete with the protected wildlife animals for the same wildlife fruits after the creation of the Park project, this might pose grave consequences for human beings. The fact is that leaving the animals with very little food reserves in the wild would compel them to resort to alternative means to survive and that is by doing greater damage to cultivated crops and even human beings.

On the issue of sources of drinking water in the area, few of the respondents mentioned access to portable water. On their expectations with regards to water source the people said some of their water sources were found in the Park area and mentioned hand-dug wells and streams. They do not more have access to the area because it is now a restricted area and the expectation was that the Park management would have provided or assisted them with regards to water supply. They however contended that two boreholes (one broken down) have been dug by the park management but that is not adequate taking into consideration the settlements in and outside of the Mole area. They therefore resort to other hand-dug wells which the community dug through communal labour and also streams outside the Park area. The challenge here has been water related diseases and snake bites.

Expectations on income generating projects were also on the higher side. When asked to specify the income generating activities that they expected to benefit as a result of establishing the Park, approximately 50% of respondents comprising male and female indicated that they wanted rabbit and grass-cutter rearing, poultry projects as well as micro-credit loans to undertake income generating projects such as pottery, vegetable gardening and charcoal production. It was interesting to learn among the people I talked to that, they did not raise any expectation that the protection of the area will lead to an appreciable improvement of the local environment, particularly the flora, fauna and climatic conditions of the area.

6.3 Perceived Challenges Related to the Park Project

There have been some challenges that serve as threats to flora, fauna and general ecosystem of the Mole Park. The greatest threat as was reported by the Law Enforcement Officer, to the nature conservation project has been human activities. Illegal off-take of the environmental resource at rates greater than the natural rates of renewal or replenishment has lead to some deficits in wildlife.

The systematic felling of trees for fuelwood to satisfy the domestic energy use has led to some considerable level of depletion of the forests in Mole Park area.

Poaching and other illegal exploitation of park resources have also been a recurrent problem facing the Mole National Park management. The concomitant effects of high population growth, landlessness, rising demand for food and local industrial activities have posed a serious threat to management of the conservation project (MNP Annual Report, 2003-2005). In the Mole National Park area, local people are reportedly agitating for release of land for farming, and if land at Mole were ever given to them then the future of the Park would be in jeopardy.

Another significant challenge that threatens the existence of the conservation project has been bush fires, which has had a huge toll on forests in the Mole National Park area. The Mole Park area continues to be afflicted annually by bush-burning through farming and hunting activities by the local people. Bush fire is an international problem and requires the concerted and collective action to minimize its harmful effects on the biosphere. The use of fire belts, institution of early warning systems and education of all sections of the local communities to handle and use fire more responsibly has been suggested.

In the view of park officials and local residents, high expectations by the local people, some based on promises by Park management as they claim has created room for discontent leading to resistance to some on-going activities at the Park area. The communities in and around the Park resource had pre-project expectations that include beneficial outcomes such as employment, development project and socio-economic concessions among other public services. Suspicion of attempt by Park management to prevent them from realising such expectations has lead to some occasional conflict. The majority of the respondents also believed that the exclusion of the local people from park's management and decision-making process was an important cause of conflicts between the park management and the local community residents.

7. Participation in Theory and Practice

7.1 Reflections on the Concept of Community Participation

There is a long history of community participation in rural resource development. Various development oriented agencies including NGOs and government departments have attempted to involve local people in some aspects of planning and implementation process of community based development projects or programmes. Various schools of thought and practice have evolved and are central to this concept. Community participation according to one school of thought is a means to increase efficiency, the central notion being that if people are involved, then they are more likely to agree with and support the new development or service (Pretty, 1995 in Rugumayo, 2000). Other authors see community participation as a right, in which the main aim is to initiate mobilization for collective action, empowerment and institution building. In throwing more light to these opinions, Winther (2008) rightly points out that participation in its fullest sense implies, first of all, that “people should identify their own goals for development instead of having such goals defined from a distance by others”. This as shall be seen later does not reflect what happens at the MNPA as the local people do not see their direct involvement in the project activities of the park as well as consultations for their views with regards to decision-making and management processes of the on-going project.

The challenge therefore has to do with the power by the local people to determine ‘needs’ and exercise control over the ‘process’ (Winther, 2008). Other problems in realizing participation in some development initiatives could be that participation may open up new avenues for local communities to challenge the existing power relations, both within communities, like challenging local elites as well as government structures. This may result into conflicts as reported by Alexander and McGregor (2000), citing Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe where despite democratic potential, has become a focus of resistance and fear among local

communities. It is claimed that CAMPFIRE transformed from its democratic and decentralizing ideals into authoritarian practice and ‘... CAMPFIRE became a word associated not with development, but with dispossession’ (ibid, 625). Despite the problems associated with participation in practice, (Gardiner and Lewis 1996; Bornstein 2005 in Winther 2008) argue that the idea still remains an ideal in development thinking. For, analyses of most development projects have shown that ‘participation’ is one of the critical components of success in rural based development projects.

Participation as a concept was so imminent in the management plan of Mole National Park on the growing realization of the difficulties of making development projects work. This came along with a realization that those local people who are suppose to benefit from such projects, seldom took part either in the designing stage or in their management. However, whilst studies of participation have mainly analyzed ways and levels in which local community people participate, impression still points to the fact that the more local people participate the more sustainable any project will become.

7.2 Participatory Approach in Natural Resource Management

Wildlife conservation of natural resources as a means for sustainable development has been characterized by different concepts of participation. For instance, in the 1980s participation was increasingly viewed as a ‘tool’ to achieve the voluntary submission of people to protected area schemes (Pretty, 1994; Rugumayo, 2000). Here, ‘participation’ was no more than a public relations exercise, in which local people were passive actors. Later around the 1980s, participation became increasingly defined as taking an interest in natural resource protection. And now, participation is seen as a means to involve local people in protected area management which in this case include community ‘power-sharing’ in decision-making (Ribot, 1999:30). There has been growing recognition that, without local involvement, there is little chance of protecting wildlife without conflicts between wildlife agencies and local people. Moreover,

the costs of park management are very high if local communities are not involved in caring for the environment.

Pimbert and Pretty (1994) however, argues that full participation of local communities in the protected area development projects is difficult for two reasons. First, it is argued that protected areas are or most often managed either by the State alone or by the State in partnership with NGOs with conservation expertise and financial resources. Second, existing management criteria emphasize that national parks and other strictly protected areas should be maintained in a natural state (Quaye, 1997). Minor disturbances caused by visitors are tolerated but not the impacts caused by the livelihood activities of local communities living in and around protected areas (Ibid). It is important to note that in the use of the term participation therefore, care needs to be taken to be able to give meaning with reference to the form and level of participation, as some forms have the potential to threaten rather than support the goals of sustainable wildlife conservation.

In my view, what is important is that the use and practice of participation should be able to clarify the application in order to achieve the set goals of the project in question. In relation to the MNPA it is evident that, the local people face both challenges as they lack expertise that will put them in a better stead to participate in running the Park project. It is also a difficulty to maintain the wildlife conservation project in a natural state due to the practice of bushing burning as well as poaching in the area.

7.2.1 Community Involvement in Park Land Acquisition Negotiations

The Mole National Park was developed as a consequence of the realization that wildlife conservation in the northern region of Ghana needed to reach beyond the boundaries of protected areas and include community involvement to achieve its conservation goals (Management Plan, MNP, 2005). As a customary law, land in Ghana is fundamentally owned by chiefs/elders (male) who are indigenes of the local area. The situation is not different from the MNPA in Northern Ghana.

These traditional leaders who have land claims on behalf of the local community members have the right to decide in land matters. In view of this, participation by the local people in the planning and management process of the Park however posed several challenges as this study will show.

Data gathered on the extent of local community involvement in land negotiations that preceded the creation of the Mole National Park is shown in table 5. The respondents involved local community members (ordinary indigenes, chiefs/elders) and other opinion leaders including officials of the park and other formal workers in the area. This selection was carefully done in order to have an encompassing view about the land acquisition process. The majority of respondents generally indicated their awareness of the involvement of their chiefs and elders in the negotiations leading to the acquisition of land on which the park is located.

Table 5: Respondents Level of Awareness of Community Involvement in Land Acquisition Processes. (N=40)

Issue (Question)	Response (Perception)	Male		Female		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Extent of community involvement in land negotiations	Involved	2	5	0	0	2	5
	Chiefs/Elders only	12	30	8	20	20	50
	Not Involved	5	12.5	3	7.5	8	20
	Not aware	4	10	6	15	10	25
Payment of compensation for land	Affirmative	14	35	10	25	24	60
	No idea	6	15	10	25	16	40

Recipients of compensations	Chiefs/Elders	18	45	8	20	26	65
	Chiefs and a few Subjects	2	5	2	5	4	10
	Not aware	2	5	8	20	10	25

Source: Fieldwork 2008

From the table most of the respondents were aware of chiefs/elders involvement in the land acquisition negotiation processes. Interviews with both men and women show that fifty five per cent (50%) comprising (30%) male and (20%) female respondents were aware of the involvement of their chiefs/elders in the land acquisition negotiation. Thus, their leaders had actually been involved but according to them such involvement was not open and hence did not benefit the community as whole. This situation supports the view of Infield (1992:8) who asserted that evicted communities were denied opportunities to participate and benefit from the protected area tourism business built on their former indigenous homes. He cited this unfortunate situation as basis for conflict between conservationists and tourism development on one hand and local people on the other hand. In a focus group discussion, majority of participants were of the view that although government legally acquired the land from the traditional leadership, details of the land acquisition process appeared to be in secrecy. The ordinary citizens of the communities were not consulted and this created room for some level of suspicion. This view point was mainly expressed by most female participants. The fact that more female participants (15%) than male (10%) had no idea about the land negotiations further points to the fact that women according to local tradition do not have land claims in the area as indicated earlier. The results therefore, reflect a significant level of women exclusion from land issues and that men mainly have privileges over land and its resources.

In most parts of Ghana it is common to hear of compensations being paid to community land owners usually chiefs and elders in order to acquire land. The compensation, most often is financial but in some cases it could be both financial and provision of infrastructural facilities in the community where the land is located. Even though land in some cases is community owned the chiefs and elders according to customary rights have control over the land. In the case of the MNPA the compensation that was agreed upon according Park management officials was financial and this was specifically paid to the chiefs/elders who are the traditional opinion leaders.

On the issue of compensation being paid by government for the acquisition of the land as well as other property that was destroyed in the process of creating the park, the majority of local residents, 24 (60%) responded and explained in affirmative. Forty per cent (40%) however, as the findings show were not aware of payment of compensation for the park land. It was especially so for the female respondents of (25%) as compared to male (10%) who were not aware of any payment of compensation in connection with the land acquisition by government. In an interview with the Senior Law Enforcement Officer of the Park (03.11.08), he indicated categorically that government paid full compensation for the land and that this negotiation was actually between government officials and opinion leaders (chiefs and elders) of the area. He also indicated that aside the chiefs and elders, local authorities of the local council were also part of the negotiation but do not have land claims. On the part of other properties on the land such as food crops it was revealed in a focus group discussion that the people who were most affected were settler-farmers who left the area immediately after it was declared a national park. They could however, not tell whether they (settler-farmers) received any compensation or not. There was strong opinion with a majority of 65% of respondents saying that only the chiefs/elders benefited from the payment. Ten per cent (10%) revealed that their chiefs and a few of their subjects also benefited. 25% (mostly female) had no idea with regards to the actual beneficiaries of the compensation paid.

The local indigenes that remained around the park area did not benefit any compensation for the loss of property (food crops) because according to them the traditional leadership presumed that the compensation was mainly paid in respect of the land and not other resource or property on it. The results here confirm Fisher's contention (Fisher, 2003 cited in Bushell & Eagles, 2007:75) that a minimum standard for protected area (PA) establishment and management was not to worsen the living conditions of poor, rural and/or local communities living within and adjacent parks (IUCN, 2003). Hence compensation was well worked out however; the ultimate beneficiaries hardly gained anything from such packages.

As said earlier, land mainly is owned by chiefs and traditional elders and the local ordinary people who benefited were privileged due to their kinship or otherwise, relationship to the chiefs/elders. As a community with a high illiteracy level whether the chiefs and elders were able to understand and based on that agreed on the term of negotiation is the challenge that most local communities face. It is in this vane Williams and Shaw (2002; 1991) lament the fact that several of such agreements arranged between local communities and governments in connection with lands acquired as protected nature reserves have been signed between governments and local rulers, most of whom are illiterates. Due to this they (local rulers) may not be well informed about the implications of land acquisition agreements for the entire community.

7.2.2 Participation Practiced in Mole National Park Area

Domfeh, (2007) asserts that participation has been acknowledged as an indispensable component of sustainable development in general and national park protection in particular. As Gardner and Lewis (1996) in Winther (2008) put it, the 'participatory paradigm' has had tremendous influence on development theory and practice especially during the last twenty five years. Evidence of failed development projects in the 1970s and 1980s in combination with an analytical focus on agency and knowledge triggered a shift from top-down

modernization models of development towards local ownership and control of such processes. Participation in development shifted focus to suggest that development should rather come from bottom-up (Gardner and Lewis 1996: 112).

In understanding participation in practice in MNPA it would be helpful to draw on Adnan et al. (1992) categories of participation. Adnan et al. (1992) cited in Gardner and Lewis (1996:111-112) argues that meanings of participation can be categorized into three. First, participation is seen as a process in which information about a planned project is made available to the public. Listening to local people's views, a more structured survey or formal dialogue regarding project options may be involved under this. This type of participation often only involves community leaders. This category leaves most decision making power in the hands of the project planners.

In the second category, participation might include project related activities rather than mere information flows. This might involve using labour from the community, or a long-term commitment by local groups to maintain services or facilities or even to plan for their future use (for instance, committees set up to protect wildlife in protected areas). Similarly, the initiative has come from outside and the people are seen to be involved but are not directly in control.

The last is one that involves the people's own initiatives and these often fall outside the scope of the project agenda. This is what some argue to be the only true form of participation, they are not imposed from outside. If mobilization emanates from the poorer sections of the community, it is also truly empowering. A famous example of this is the Chipko movement in the Himalayas that began in the 1970s, in which women mobilised themselves to protect the trees that were so vital for their economy from commercial loggers (Shiva, 1988 in Gardner and Lewis, 1996). Effective local participation therefore is an important component for sustainable management of national parks, which can relate wildlife tourism to conservation and development.

A significant objective of many rural support projects such as wildlife conservation and ecotourism often includes greater local involvement with and empowerment of diverse people and groups. Sustainable development is certainly threatened without this cooperation or collaboration (Pretty and Pimbert 1995). This cooperation and collaboration makes the local people feel as part of a resource that belongs to them as well as serving as basis for trust and peaceful development process devoid of potential conflicts that may arise as a result of creation of nature reserves especially in Africa. There is always a dilemma for park management with regards to both 'need' and 'fear' for people's participation. For, in as much as local people involvement is always needed, there is equally some level of fear that if the involvement is less controllable and precise it is likely to slow down the planning and implementation process of the conservation project.

As hosts of the projects as in the case of Mole National Park, the protection and management of the parks may not achieve its objectives without the active participation of the local people who every day depend on forests and trees for their existence. In discussing participation in the Mole National Park Area (MNPA) therefore, I took a conscious effort in order to capture the input that the local people are able to make in the planning and management phases of the Park Project, thus, at which stage in the process and in what form they really get involved in participation. Whilst recognizing the need for local people participation, many conservation management outfits place clear limits on the form and degree of participation that they tolerate in protected area management (Pound 2003). This is particularly true for strictly protected areas (National Parks, Wilderness Reserves and Natural Monuments) but also applies to some extent to all other protected area categories.

Community participation according to the Resource Management Unit Officer of the Park (04.11.08) was a central concept to the development of the Mole National Park in the course of writing up a Management Plan (1996) for the Park project. He said that the concept had expectations, enabled some level of

collaboration, but also disappointed considerable number of local people in the MNPA. According to him participation as a concept was so imminent in the management plan on the realization of the difficulties of making development projects work. This came along with a realization that those local people who are suppose to benefit from such projects, seldom took part either in the designing stage or in their management. However, whilst studies of participation have mainly analyzed forms and levels in which local people participate, impression still points to the fact that the more local people participate the more sustainable any project will become.

In relating the three categories of participation to participation in the MNPA the first two criteria appear to match but to a considerable level. In MNPA the community leaders (chiefs) were involved in land acquisition negotiation and this was the planning stage of the project. The views of the local people in general with regards to the land were not sought as the findings have shown. Views of the local people in this context are only gotten through surveys by NGOs and researchers. The decision-making and implementation powers are left in the hands of government officials as well as the management of the park project. The second type where there is local people involvement in project related activities is also practiced but not in its fullest. Local committees are formed to help protect the wildlife in MNPA. This is seen as a source of menial employment rather than participation. The people only serve as guides and have no control over whatever decisions that are taken with regards to the park activities.

7.2.3 Local Participation in the Park's Development Initiatives

As mentioned, the success and sustainability of rural development initiatives depend on local people's participation in the planning and implementation phases as well as management of the project. The IUCN (1993) emphasized that local communities should be involved in planning and management of all tourism associated with protected areas, like national parks. For their involvement gives them awareness that they are regarded as stake-holders and if they know they

stand to benefit, they might work to ensure that the project succeeds and will contribute local ideas towards its success. According to Kamugisha et al (1997:4) there are two major ways of involving local people in protected areas activities: One is to give them a direct stake in the incomes accruing from the various activities; and the other is to divert their attention away from the protected area by providing benefits to the community on their present land.

The local people in the MNPA have been involved in one way or the other to help promote conservation and other development activities of the park project. Each and every one of the respondents I talked to knew at least, of one activity or the other, going on in the Park. With regards to their and other local people's involvement in some of these activities initiated by Park management, there appeared to be consensus but they saw the involvement on a limited level. The main park development initiatives that saw the involvement of the local people in one way or the other include Wild life clubs/societies; Wildlife/forest protection committees; Fire volunteers, Tour guiding and Interpretation; Accommodation and catering services; Selling of foodstuff/souvenirs; Cultural displays; Micro-credit activities (bee keeping, Shea butter extraction, Gari processing, craft, batik tie and dye) Source: MNP *Annual Report* (2003 & 2005). These were initiated by the Park project and supported by other agencies such as A Rocha International and Dutch Development Agency.

By many, reference was given to operations of the wildlife and forest protection committees, tour guiding and interpretation as well as wild life clubs and societies were classified as voluntary activities. A different picture was displayed when it got to women. Most of the women in a group meeting reiterated their views that they are not usually consulted when it comes to issues of land and other resources. One of the women categorically argued that "As long as we have not been incorporated we hardly know anything when it gets to direct park activities as most are regarded as activities reserved for men". They however, concede that the men only allow them to harvest wild fruits and fuel wood from the land because that is an activity reserved for women and without which their

households will face serious challenges as it serves as source of livelihood. Their involvement in recent times is in retail activities they do around the park which include the sale of foodstuffs and souvenirs. These income generating activities they engage in is through micro-credit scheme supported by the Dutch government in collaboration with the park management. Even though this package is for both men and women but the women were of the view that theirs is more effective and appears successful because they are easily organized as groups as compared to their male counterparts.

The settlements located close to the park's administrative headquarters and the Mole Motel which accommodates visitors and tourists appear to have a considerable level of participation. This is the main area of tourist activity and the local people here can be seen selling, guiding and interpreting among others. Perhaps this situation can reasonably be explained by means of the gravity model of tourism which postulates that the shorter the distance between any community and the centre of tourist activity, the greater would be the rate of interaction between the two locations; conversely, the greater the distance between the two locations the lower the rate of interaction between them as a result of 'distance decay' (Witt and Witt's 1995: 458-9). Majority the local people held the view that due to the unequal nature of their involvement in the Park's activities the distribution of benefits of the Park has equally been highly unequal. Certain individuals (opinion leaders) and communities (due to proximity advantage) materially and politically were considered to have benefited to a far greater extent than others. For instance local communities living in remote areas of MNPA received substantially less development benefits than their counterparts residing in closer proximity to the MNPA headquarters.

Even though the illiteracy level is high in the MNPA, they claim to have 'indigenous' knowledge which can be helpful in the activities of the conservation resource successfully. Mitchell (1997) offers explanations in this regard for involving local communities in natural resource management among which is to acquire certain knowledge and perceptions which are remote in the world of

science. After their involvement as many said, they can then be given the authority to manage their own activities with guidance from the management.

To sum up, the main specific activities which local communities are involved but not limited to include selling of foodstuffs and souvenirs, tour guiding and income generating activities as outlined above. The other activities which the community members classify as voluntary park activities that they are also involved in include wildlife committees, wildlife societies and fire volunteers. No respondent however mentioned any direct involvement in the Park's administrative and management activities. According to an Assembly Member (opinion leader) of the area that I talked to as one of the key informants he had this to say: *"The way we are seen to be participating in the park project is without possibilities to make any meaningful contribution especially with regards to the management of the Park's activities. I have to be truthful that in recent times the Park's management has helped in providing some small loan schemes to groups to undertake various income generating activities. However, when it gets to participating in taking decisions with regards to implementation of programmes we are often left out"*. He indicated that if they had been part of the decision-making and implementation they would have done and would still do a lot in helping to develop these rural settlements of ours. He based his argument on respect for local people in any participatory process irrespective of their level of education and had this to say: *"My brother, participation for me is a question of respect such that one does not feel embarrassed because you can not read or write. Participation is about respect and truth by whomever"* This reflects my observation that there is no local involvement in the administration of accommodation and catering services. Indeed, I observed only one standard tourist accommodation facility (Mole Motel) located inside the Park region.

The research findings revealed that there is minimal community participation or involvement in many aspects of the core activities in the park. This is particularly so in the administration and management of the National Park. This is true of the Mole Park project as the local people are only given the opportunity to indirectly

participate as shown in the various park activities elaborated above. There was limited local involvement particularly in the administration and management of the Park project. They are not part of the Park's decision-making body and are not consulted before adoption of any policies. In support of this Cernea, L. as cited in Akitanda (1994:32) argue that local participation is when people are given the authority to gather their own efforts to take care of their resources, make decisions and manage the activities that affect their lives. However, park records (management plans and reports) have community participation as a key element of the Park project but it was difficult to ascertain clear answers as to why the local people are not involved in decision making process with regards to Park initiatives. The consequence of this has been mistrust, conflict and poaching as park officials alluded to.

The low profile played by the local people in participating in the planning and decision making process of park programmes appear to fall short of the goal of community-based resource management that seeks to foster relationship between community conservation of a resource and its opportunities to the local people. Effective local participation is viewed as an important component for sustainable management of protected areas, which can relate wildlife tourism to conservation and development. For community-based protected area ecotourism to be sustainable, the local community should be allowed in defining and regulating the use of their areas at the local level in a transparent way so as to build trust between the management and the community (Ribot, 1999). This bottom-up approach seeks for a greater local role in management or share responsibilities in the absence of an existing authority. Despite the fact that local participation in management activities is limited as the data has shown, it is however an indication that, the community is not completely left out in some activities of the conservation resource. Based on the awareness that local community participation in protected area resource management is a tool for wildlife resource preservation, the management has at least involved the local

communities in some aspects of wildlife resource management even though as the people acknowledged, there is a lot more to be done.

In an interview with the Livelihoods Project Officer (04.11.08) it revealed that there are on-going programmes that seek to involve the communities in the management of the Park's programmes and activities. Their participation however, as the findings revealed can be said to be passive in that the people are involved but not directly involved in taking decisions bordering on the park's programmes. As Gardener and Lewis (1996:111) put it, the initiative comes from outside and only leaves most decision-making powers to the project management. It was further noted during discussions that community members are informed of what to do and what not to do and they have to abide by that without their own input. This might amply be supported by Pretty's typology of participation (passive) in which participants participate by being informed on what is going to take place or has already happened.

Community-based natural conservation and resources management have turn out to be an imperative area that needs the cooperation and collaboration of local host communities. This approach as indicated earlier pursues the shift from the top-down to community-based rural development and their involvement approaches (bottom-up): the attention is geared towards the people, their means of living and local associations, native ideas and local organizational structures.

7.2.4 Challenges to Participation

A key to effective participatory approach in wildlife resource management requires some form of education of the people in question to be able to participate in the management and decision-making process of community-based projects. As the study found out, the situation in Mole National Park Area can be described as passive or indirect as indicated earlier. This does not give an opportunity to share in decision-making as the decision-makers do not feel obliged to take on board local people's views even when they are consulted. This

is to reiterate Pretty's (1994) typology of participation (passive participation) in which participants participate by being informed on what is going to take place or has already happened but not directly taking part in what is to be done. Decision-making in theory involves consensus of stake-holders. As was evident in the research, local people in the village did not take part in all stages of the wildlife conservation resource that manifested into a rural ecotourism project. Hence it seems that the participation did not include all groups in the local communities.

It is worthy to note that the political and administrative environment will to some extent determine the climate for participation. In a society where flow of information and openness is not encouraged, the environment will not be conducive for genuine participation (Oakley, 1991:11). Just as in most African countries, the administrative system in Ghana is not generally an open one where flow of information is open and documents easily available. The Mole National Park management system is a product of this political/administrative culture.

A related problem arises from the fact that the local settlements are not homogenous masses of people. Communities are differentiated as shown in the general features of respondents in chapter three, and statements made by them. The village hierarchy determines an individual's status within the community and his/her involvement in programmes of the Park resource. The common trend is that, the chiefs/elders and local elites have the privilege as compared to subjects (ordinary people) to be consulted and therefore, dominate the participatory process in Park programmes. As it was said these opinion leaders especially the local elites are often quick to accept or change the rules of the game with the collaboration of the management and/or bureaucracy at the expense of the local communities.

There may also be a fear that there might be an over-involvement of 'less-experienced or educated' people. Project planners often fear losing control over 'their' project. Linked to this as was statements made by some local people in the

MNPA, is usually a hesitation of including well-educated locals who more readily than less formally educated people can scrutinize documents such as the management plan.

7.3 Summary Discussion of Main Findings

Analysis of the data collected from a cross-section of the local residents, employees of the Mole Park and the some tourist on the fieldwork leads to the following findings:

Records on the establishment of the Mole National Park did not exist in the archives of the West Gonja District Assembly. The reason was that (according to the West Gonja Coordinating Director, in personal communication - *16.11.08*) all arrangements on issues of land acquisition and compensation were conducted directly between government on the one side, and the Paramount Chief and his elders on the other. It is also not on record that the land acquisition agreement had ever been reviewed.

The land on which the park has been established was legally acquired by government in 1971. Government paid compensation (for both the land and the property that was destroyed as a direct consequence of establishing the project); the compensation was received by the local chiefs on behalf of their subjects. However, individual subjects (especially migrant farmers) received no compensation for the loss of their properties. More than 85% of the local residents were self-employed, low-income peasant farmers whose crops (such as maize, groundnuts and cassava) were occasionally destroyed by the protected wild animals. No compensation was paid directly to residents whose properties were destroyed by the wild animals. The Park's policy of non-payment of compensation to the peasant farmers sometimes generated conflict between the local people and the Park's conservation authorities.

There was a limited local community involvement particularly in the administration and management of the Mole National Park. The local people

played a low profile role in policy implementation at the Park, since they were not part of the Park's decision-making body, and were never consulted before the adoption of policies. There was much disparity in the levels of involvement in the Park activities by the various local communities. The statistics indicated that the settlements located to the south and close to the Park's headquarters (e.g. Larabanga, Mognori and Murugu) participated more in the Park's activities than the communities located faraway from the administrative offices of the Park's (see Map). The phenomenon is explained by the 'Gravity Theory' which holds the view that the shorter the distance between any community and the centre of interaction (tourist activity), the greater would be the rate of interaction between the two locations; conversely, the greater the distance between the two locations, the lower the rate of interaction between them as a result of distance decay (Witt & Witt, 1995:458-9).

Very few members of the local communities were formally employed at the Park. For example, out of the extra workforce of about 235 men and women employed at the Park, about 5 per cent were local residents (MNP Annual Report, 2003 & 2005): Several offences committed at the Park by the local residents (e.g. bush burning and poaching) is associated with the local people's attempt to compensate themselves for their unfulfilled dreams.

The socio-economic activities at the Park did promote considerable level of unity between the local communities and the Park Management as the Park in recent times has been directly involved in community development initiatives. According to the Senior Wildlife Officer (in personal communication), the Parks conservation policy did not initially address issues of community development, and this gave rise to public discontent but the situation on the ground now shows a different picture as the findings show.

Due to poverty in the Mole National Park Area the local residents could not enjoy the tourist products of the Park. To improve their income position therefore, they (especially women) expected to be granted access to the Park to

harvest economic fruits that they depended on before the creation of Park such as Shear nuts and *dawadawa* beans for the local industry. They expected also to be permitted to hunt for bush meat on approved days to supplement their diet.

Although the Park has fast become an internationally recognized ecotourism attraction, the surrounding communities were not encouraged to develop community tourist attractions in order to reduce poverty. The local residents however, said they interacted cordially with visitors to the Park and that they did not in any way resent the presence of tourists. According to most of the respondents (over 80%) the presence of visitors was quite tolerable in the area. Interaction between visitors and hosts was done mainly through visitors contact with residents in their homes, during traditional/cultural activities or during commercial transactions between the two stakeholders.

Almost all the respondents, about 99 per cent indicated that the presence of the Park project (particularly its function as a tourist attraction) boosted the image of the area: they observed that it was a source of pride to the local communities. The majority of the visitors to the Mole Park arrived there by means of hired buses, tourist coaches and cars. Yet, the roads leading to the Park were structurally poor and impassable especially during the rainy season.

Compared with the East African and Latin American Parks as related has shown, Mole faces the disadvantages of difficult terrain and poor wildlife viewing sites. Also hospitality services at Mole, apart from being inadequate, were quite below international standards. The only 'standard' tourist accommodation facility in the area is the Mole Motel (One Star) which had fewer than 60 tourist beds.

Generally, the views of the majority of respondents (local residents and park officials) consented to a conservation development in the area for its potential contribution to improving local livelihood in the Park communities through public services and development initiatives, wildlife conservation and other sustainable development outcomes. The results and views of respondents

expressed in the study however, indicate that the role of local community in the conservation and management of the Park resource can not be under estimated.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusion

This final chapter provides the conclusion of the study and offers some recommendations based on the research findings. This also includes some issues that emerged and deserve to be highlighted for future research considerations.

This thesis is about the establishment of Mole National Park in the West Gonja District of Northern Ghana. Three main issues have been central in this thesis. One is the underlying principles that run the negotiations leading to the creation of the Mole National Park. Another is the over all perception of the local people on programmes and activities of the Park project and its impact on the communities in the Park vicinity. The third is on the current level of local participation in the management of the park project.

Primary data for the study was obtained by administering semi-structured open-ended questions to samples of 40 respondents randomly and incidentally selected from the local community as well as purposefully or strategically selected park officials and visitors to the Park. Additional primary information was obtained through scheduled interviews with personalities from a number of relevant organizations, and through focus group discussions held with some organized groups in the communities. Secondary data was got from published and unpublished works.

The case of Mole National Park has been treated in the light of various schools of thought on conservation resource management versus development. Among these, the models under Community-Based Conservation approach to natural resource management were particularly relevant for analyzing the case in question. This cluster of approaches was also useful for exploring the research questions and discussing some of the shortcomings in project management in terms of proving sustainable development. These include but not limited i) the two models of Community-Based Conservation approach (the Populist and

Rights-based theories) of natural resource management and ii) the Classic or Traditional paradigm of protected area management was also highlighted.

It has been established that some form of community participation in the management of conservation and wildlife resources has a relationship with socio-economic development. When communities engage in the activities initiated by management but not direct participation in management issues as mentioned earlier, they would be able to make a living from these activities which would improve their living conditions. When these activities are sustainably managed it would go a long way to enhance the socio-economic situation of the residents of the communities which helps in poverty reduction in the long run.

I argue that although the principles of community-based conservation approach aim at empowering and actively involving local communities in the whole process of wildlife conservation and management, participation in the Mole Park area is viewed with mixed feelings by the local people. The Mole Park management does not involve the local communities directly the whole way in the management and decision-making programmes of the wildlife conservation project. The form of participation may be described as indirect as the local people are seen in engaging in development initiatives of the Park project but not at management level. This is found to lie in the usefulness of the two schools of thought under Community-Based Conservation and Resource Management theory (Populist and Rights-based models of development) as presented above.

The underlying principles that run the management of MNPA can be read in the livelihood as manifested by the level of poverty, and also the absence of highly educated local people to take part in the management processes of the Park project. For, development populism under community-based conservation theory recommends active involvement of project principals (local people) right from programme conceptualization, planning, management, implementation to evaluation. When understood as such, local communities are empowered to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors, rather than passive subjects,

manage the resources, make decisions and control the activities which affect their lives. However, what pertains on the ground in the study area is that the current system of management favors the Mole Park management because the local people cannot identify measures and instruments in order to bring meaningful local changes. It appears the Mole Park management overly ignores this key principle of Community-Based Natural Resource Management as discussed in chapter 3.

I would further argue as pertains at the MNPA that the local people do not feel they are recognized by the Park management as the owners of the conservation resource. The rights-based model of sustainable development and management of resources enables local community people to negotiate access and assert their entitlement to resources, which is an important tool to broker better development opportunities. This perspective sees local participation in resource management as a right, in which the main aim is to initiate mobilization for local action and empowerment. But as I argue in this study, the Park management does not see local participation as a right for the local people who are also stakeholders. However, alternative income generating and livelihood retention activities in the Mole Park area are encouraged and supported by the conservation agency and this is in tandem with the rights-based framework of sustainable development and management of natural resources.

The expectations and perceptions of the respondents revealed that the park project's tourism activities have helped to improve upon general developmental outcomes in the area. Through the park project profitable development initiatives have been introduced and this does not only offer employment to the local people, but also assist them in diverse ways to reduce poverty. Such initiatives would give the affected people, in the view of Barnett (1994:33), a sense of pride rather than a bitter feeling of loss of local autonomy. To a considerable extent this was the case in the Mole National Park area as the conservation project through its tourism activities has contributed in generating revenue for certain socio-economic development as revealed by the findings. The benefits from the

Park project to the local communities include development in education, health care and funded income micro-credit schemes for especially women.

This shows as the findings suggest that regardless of the challenges of the Mole Park project its ecotourism activities it has helped to contribute to reducing poverty to some extent in the Mole area through some of the funded development projects. As the conservation benefits and development projects funded by the revenues generated from Mole park's tourism activities was more beneficial from a long-term and sustainable perspective that of employment particularly is both an immediate and long term benefit.

As the study also established, the basic development challenge of most governments of less developed countries including Ghana is often limited to mere consultations with leaders of indigenous landowners and a few local residents when land is required for establishing public projects. The focus should be on how to involve and direct affected people to target their actual development goals in order to abate any adverse effects on their socio-economic livelihoods. In Mole the majority of the local ordinary people were not consulted during the land acquisition negotiation process prior to the establishment of the Park project. Consultation and negotiations as shown by the findings was limited to community leaders.

Bush-burning has been one of the major environmental challenges around the Mole National Park area. This practice is common as the local residents are peasant farmers and still resort to any form of traditional farming practice to prepare the land for food crop production. In addition to crop production, the local inhabitants resort to bush burning in order stimulate early sprouting of fleshy annual plants to lure protected animals out of the protected area where they can easily be poached.

8.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, I suggest the following recommendations to be considered for possible action:

- The Mole National Park conservation management should involve the local communities in all issues of the Parks development to ensure the residents full cooperation. The fact that the local people are masters of their environment cannot be disputed; they have much to offer in the understanding of local situations. Intensive consultations with the affected communities including ordinary people and not limited to chiefs/elders and leaders should always precede the implementation of any policy decisions on development schemes particularly in protected areas, in order to enlist and retain local cooperation.
- The Mole National Park should, in long term planning, should emphasize the recruitment of a reasonable number of the local people as employees. This would justify the people's expectation of employment opportunities from the Park.
- There is the need for a clear policy for reviewing land acquisition agreements to be signed between government and every future generation of landowners. Such reviews should hopefully address the socio-economic needs of all future landlords or generations, and foster cooperation and support for all development projects in rural areas. Conservation authorities (acting for and on behalf of government) should always plan, design and manage their activities in such a way as to elicit full cooperation of local hosts.
- Distinction should be made between the payment of compensation to indigenous people in respect of land acquired, and to local residents whose property is affected by the establishment of any public project. Compensation paid in respect of any movable property must reach those

who are actually affected. This means that all compensation should be paid direct to the right people. The operation of a compensation scheme to take care of property destroyed by wild animals should be given a serious thought. Compensation to the peasant farmers for any crops destroyed will reduce the rate of conflicts that have often bedeviled rural development initiatives.

- Poaching and other offences committed at the Park can be effectively checked through the provision of more community development projects and the introduction of diverse income generation projects such as animal rearing and gardening, the provision of irrigation facilities will promote all-year-round farming to help eradicate poverty in the area. These offences committed at the Park can also be effectively checked by reasonably empowering the surrounding communities economically and through education on the importance of nature conservation.
- Also, alternative energy sources should be provided, since the communities are prevented from fetching fuel-wood from the Park. Residents may be encouraged to plant fast-growing commercial plants in their communities for fuelwood.
- The local people should be educated and encouraged to get involved in community tourism development. Community development projects may include the provision of restaurants and home-stay facilities. Residents should be guided to package their cultural and historical products in such a way that would make them attractive to visitors. The development of numerous tourist attractions could also induce tourists to stay longer and spend more money in the Park and in the communities; this will very likely promote return visits which are an indication of the popularity of the Park as tourist attraction.

Key issues emerged in the course of the study deserve to be highlighted for future research considerations. First and foremost, as an environmental issue is

the paradox of bush-burning at the park. The communities surrounding the Park burn the bushes in their environment immediately after harvesting the annual food and cash crops. Bush burning in the study area appears to be an annual activity by the local community members which is intended to stimulate early sprouting of fleshy plants to lure protected animals out of the protected area in order to poach them. Secondly, it may be useful for future study to delve into the possibility of developing community tourism in the entire study area.

Following from the discussions of the empirical results, it is worthy indicating that there are ample grounds for eliciting more local cooperation and participation pertaining activities of the conservation resource as well as in undertaking community development efforts. A more participatory practice where local people participate in problem definition, suggest solutions and benefit immediately and in the long run, might lead to a more socially and environmentally sustainable natural resource management.

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APENDIX I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT UNIVERSITY OF OSLO, NORWAY

Date of interview.....Gender.....Age.....

Marital Status.....Religion.....

Residence.....

Level of Education.....

Occupation.....organization.....

1. How long have you lived here.....

2. How long have you been engaged in the work you do.....

3. What other sources of income do you have.....

A) RESIDENTS EXPECTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE PARK

4 To what extent was your community involved in the creation of the Park?.....

5. Are you aware of compensation being paid in respect of the land/property acquired by Government?.....

6. To whom was the compensation paid.....

7. Several activities are going on at the Park. Could you please mention some of them.....

8. Are you involved in any one or more of them.....

9. In which one of the activities will you like participate.....

10. Do the local people have any ways of putting forward their opinions or concerns.....

-
11. In which ways do you think the presence of the Park has affected your community's socio-economic and traditional activities.....
 12. Do members of your community receive compensation for any damage caused to their property by wildlife?.....
 13. What special concessions or initiatives should be introduced at the Park to make the local people happy?
 14. Mention any specific benefit that your community is presently enjoying due to the presence of the Park.
 15. State any community development project that you would wish to have in the community.....
 16. In what ways do you think the local community takes part in the activities of the Park.....
 17. What do you really consider to be participation in a community project.....
 18. Mention any income generating projects that you wish should be introduced by the Park project in this community of yours.....
 19. Do activities at the Park promote unity among the local communities.....
 20. Do some of the activities at the Park offer the community opportunity to teach outsiders about your culture.....
 21. What employment avenues have the community benefited from the Park project.....
 22. Do you think the number of trees and animals have increased since the creation of the Park.....
 23. What kind of access do you have access to the Park area.....
 24. Have restrictions to the Park affected your livelihood (in which way).....

25. Does the Park management give residents the opportunity to interact with visitors/tourists.....

26. Have there been occasions of conflict between members of your community and the conservation authorities?

27. Do you have any suggestions as to how to resolve the conflicts at the Park area.....

B) QUESTIONS FOR ELDERS

23. Was any agreement ever signed between the Government and the chiefs/elders and people of this area before the establishment of the Mole Park.....

24. Who do think actually released the land for the establishment of the Park.....

25. Are you aware any compensation ever paid by government for acquiring the land?

26. Who were the actual beneficiaries of the compensation?

27. What was the community expecting to derive from the creation of the Park.....

28. Have there been occasions of conflict between members of your community and the Park conservation authorities.....

APPENDIX II: QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE PARK

Date of interview.....

Gender..... Age.....

Marital Status..... Religion.....

Residence.....

Level of Education.....

Occupation.....organization.....

1. How long have you lived here.....

-
2. How long have you been engaged in the work you do.....
 3. What other sources of income do you have.....
 4. Do you hail from the Mole community or your presence is based on your job...
 5. No of years of experience in this job.....
 6. What is your responsibility in this job.....
 7. Do you do any job in addition to your official business at the Park.....
 8. Which goals do you perceive as important in the management of the MNP.....
 9. What particular jobs have you been working as regards to the community.....
 10. Which initiatives has the Park project taken towards development and environmental issues in the communities.....
 11. How have these initiatives been received in the park communities.....
 12. What are some of the challenges that the Park project faces.....
 13. Have you read any of the MNP management plan.....
 14. Which issues are very pertinent in the management plans in relation to the host community.....
 15. How do you regard the relationship between Park authorities and the local people.....?
 16. Please describe any activity (ies) at the Park that is contributing to the areas development.....
 17. In your opinion, in what ways has Park establishment affected the local communities...?
 18. Does the Park management have meetings to solicit views of local people on programmes and activities of the Park.....
 19. Suggest ways of improving upon activities at the Park.....

APPENDIX III: QUESTIONS FOR TOURISTS AT THE MOLE NATIONAL PARK

Date.....Gender.....Age.....

Level of Education.....

Profession.....

1. What is your nationality.....

2. What is your main purpose of visit to Mole.....

3. By what means of transport did you get to the Park.....

4. Is this your first time of visiting the Park.....

5. If you are a repeat visitor what has motivated your return.....

5. Where are you residing during this trip to the Mole National Park.....

6. For how long will you be visiting the Mole National Park.....

7. List any activities you undertook or will undertake in the Park.....

8. Have you observed any problems confronting the Park.....

9. How do you consider your interaction with the local resident.....

10. Do you participate in celebrating some traditional/cultural activities in the area.....